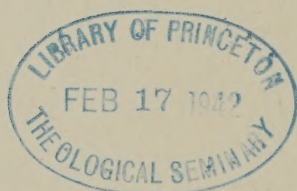


HENRIC SCHARTAU
AND
THE ORDER OF GRACE

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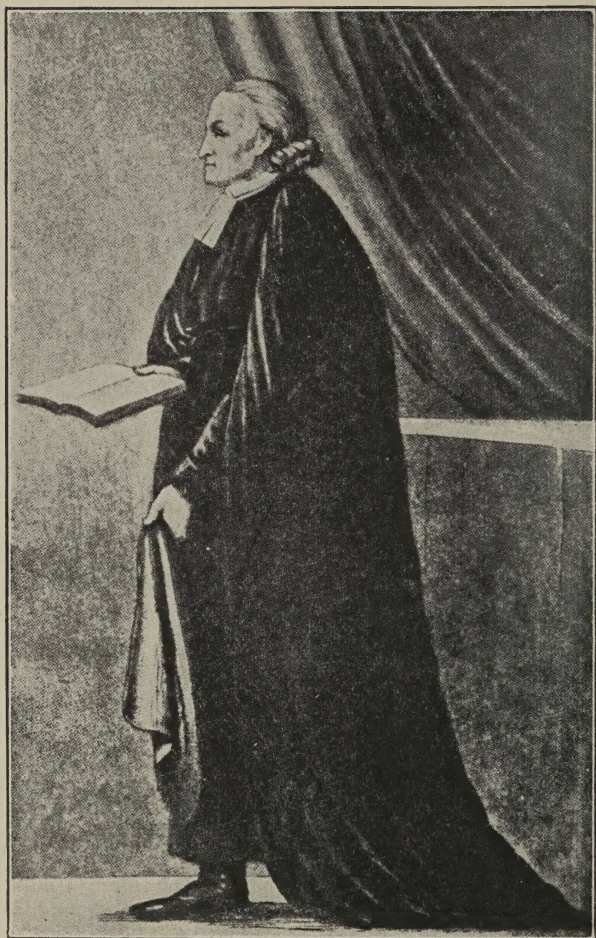


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Schartau, Henric, 1757-1825.

Henric Schartau and the
order of grace

HENRIC SCHARTAU



HENRIC SCHARTAU



HENRIC SCHARTAU

AND

THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

Translated by
S. G. HÄGGLUND



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A Word of Introduction

One of the earliest and dearest memories from my childhood is that of mother reading the Postil of Henric Schartau. After her death I inherited the blessed book and began to read it with new interest. Three years earlier I had, upon my visit to Sweden, met the Rev. L. M. Engström, one of the most spiritual pastors in the Church of Sweden and, indeed, one of the most devout of men to be found anywhere or at any time. This honorable divine made the statement that in his opinion Schartau was the greatest religious psychologist that the Christian Church has ever had, excepting neither the reformers nor the church fathers.

This very naturally increased my interest. A few years later I bought the Biography of Henric Schartau by Henrik Hägglund, another of the notable "Church-herds" in the Church of Sweden of to-day. It is needless to say that the name of this author rather interested me, especially as I had heard much good of him and his father many years before. A second and greatly enlarged edition of this Biography was published in the beginning of 1925 as a Centennial Biography, a hundred years after Schartau's death, Feb. 3, 1825. When I finished this second edition, which had quite captivated my interest from beginning to end, I gave expression to my feelings in the following words,

“Schartau was indeed a great man
And a prophet of the Lord.”

The feeling grew upon me that the Lutheran Church of America, and especially those of us who hail from the Church of Sweden, should also commemorate the hundredth anniversary of so great a Lutheran as Schartau was. I first thought of translating “My Mother’s Postil.” And in fact I offered to do so. It seemed to me that such a title should appeal to many who have memories like my own. As an alternative, I offered to translate the above named Biography. The publishers, however, did not see their way clear to carry out either suggestion, but thought best to make a selection of a few of Schartau’s sermons and to publish these with extracts of Dr. Hägglund’s Biography. It is with the approval of my worthy namesake as well as that of the publishers that I am now offering a much smaller volume than first intended.

Schartau is perhaps best known for his studies in the order of grace, “nådens ordning”, as it is called in Swedish, “ordo salutis,” the way of salvation. In fact he made a real contribution to this branch of Christian theology, delving deeply, not only into the Holy Scriptures, but also into human life. Schartau had the gifts of a real investigator and systematizer. He therefore speaks with unwavering authority, like one who knows whereof he speaks. We must not then here expect to find the outpourings of sentimentalism, but rather look for clear pronouncements of divine truth. Schartau, like all really great men, grows larger and larger in the proportion that one learns to know him,

and I can heartily commend him to the prayerful consideration of every reader.

May I add that I have applied myself to the work prayerfully, hoping that in this way also the Swedish branch of the great Lutheran Church may make somewhat of a distinct contribution to American theology and to devotional literature in the English language, to the upbuilding of the Kingdom and to the salvation of souls.

Vasa Church Parsonage, Boston, Mass.,

March, 1926.

THE TRANSLATOR.

Henric Schartau

Extracts of a Biography by Dr. H. Hägglund.

The remarkable thing about Schartau does not consist in his experiences, but in his life work and in its influence upon his contemporaries and upon posterity.

We have a few autobiographical annotations of his childhood and early life, and we shall let him tell his own story so far as possible.

Schartau's Childhood and Early Life

"I was born in Malmö, September 27, 1757. My father was then city clerk and subsequently became councilman. His name was Anders Schartau, and my mother was Anna Catharina Falkman. I was named after my grandfather Henric, who was also a city official, first clerk, then court secretary, and finally mayor of Malmö. He was a genuinely godfearing man. In my associations with him I soon experienced the sweetness of being in the house of my heavenly Father. This experience helped to bring me back, after I had for some time during my youth drifted away. I can remember how I found something solemn, dignified, and important in the passages of Scripture which my grandfather had written for me in a little book. When I read these to him I was in the state of an elderly converted Christian, excepting the greater degree of

enlightenment which comes with growth and increasing years. At five to ten years of age I was a true Christian, having from my baptism remained in the state of grace. But I was a child, and like other children of God whom He has foreknown and granted to become like His Son, I had to go the way which my Saviour had gone before me: He increased in wisdom as He increased in years.

“Although no merely external changes can subvert a person’s state of grace, even as they cannot subvert the Rock of Salvation, Christ, who has overcome the world, nevertheless my spirituality waned and imperceptibly disappeared after my grandfather’s death. My inclination for useful human learning remained, and the endowments which the Creator had given me in advance of my age were exercised at the expense of sacrifices which exceeded the actual ability of my father; but the godfearing father of my mother was gone, gone were the intimate conversations in which he frequently engaged with me, and I lacked the encouragement which these had given me. My entrance into the Malmö high school or, as it was then called, the Latin school, gave me increased useful education, but I also learned much evil from my comrades. Seeds of thorns were sown which, though long concealed, eventually came up, especially when the soil lay inactive.

“In the year 1770 my mother died of black fever. One of the maids had become infected at the funeral of one of her relatives. She came home, took sick, and died. Curiosity led us children, especially the older ones, to stand near and look on when invoice was taken of her clothing, and so we too became in-

fected. I was the oldest and stood nearest, and hence, was first infected, and thereupon the three next to me in age. Only three of the sixteen then constituting the household escaped the contagion, namely the other maid and my two younger sisters; but neither the fear of death through which I passed nor the trial that visited our home could arouse me to any thorough reflection, though my mother's death quickened in me a sad feeling of loss, when I awoke one morning and learned that I had no mother any more.

"As a widower, father found occasion to be away from home rather frequently, and so I lacked the care so necessary at that age, and I enjoyed far too great independence. Indeed, I can recall marked deviations from the ways of the Lord, even though my backsliding was not noticed by people in general. The social and political conditions were then deplorable. Political unrest constrained my father to urge upon the president of the high school to let me graduate at fourteen in order to transfer me to the university at Lund. I was in this way even more alienated from my father, especially after he remarried, but I also escaped from some associations which would have been harmful. My immature promotion to the university proved detrimental, leaving sad gaps which even extraordinary talents could not fill. My natural inclination for studies became somewhat paralyzed. I was given a special tutor, a splendid pedagogue, but one who was cloistered in his study, not giving me the guidance and inspiration I needed. Nor was the general atmosphere at the university altogether wholesome. Fighting, drinking, and gambling were very general."

Conversion and Spiritual Development.

Schartau graduated as Master of Arts when he was twenty-one years old and was ordained to the holy ministry two years later. The great turning-point in his life occurred when he was twenty.

As has been mentioned, he got his first impressions of God from his grandfather. The spirit of his home seems not to have been conducive to spiritual development, and so Schartau valued his grandfather all the more. Even during his last sickness he spoke tenderly and appreciatingly of him, "Alas, I remember the first word of God given to me by my godfearing grandfather, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble'. It has been inscribed in my mind as with a pen of steel. Though I have not been able to grasp it with both hands, it has not slipped from my fingers."

From his tenth to his twentieth year Schartau had gradually grown shallow and worldly minded, but when the great crisis came there was a complete change, a thorough conversion. We shall let him tell his own story. "I spent most of my time in my study" — being tutor in a country home — "Scriver's Treasury had entirely captivated me, so that I did not grow tired of its verbose discussions, nor take offense at its somewhat inappropriate expressions and almost obsolete imagery, for it was God's supernatural power which imperceptibly entered my heart, and overpowered my mind, which had previously wandered about in so-called honorable vanity. The wise hand which had grasped my heart led me likewise imperceptibly into the Word of God. Before I was aware, I was so captivated that

I forgot everything to read the Bible. At that time there was to be communion in the church. Shortly before, I had neglected communion for a pleasure trip. Now my conscience smote me for this and also made it clear to me that I had otherwise prostituted this divine institution and gone to communion by habit or caprice, thus covering painted sins and making a veneer for a finer worldliness. I was driven by an obscure need, by a hidden attraction, and by an incomprehensible craving. We had poor preachers, poor in preaching or in life, but the great Shepherd of souls kept His promise, which in like cases He has given to His dearly bought sheep, even to those that have drifted away, 'I shall shepherd them according to their need.' During a wretched and careless altar address He gave me grace so that, while reading the confession, I had a living insight and conviction, especially at the words, 'I therefore know that I am worthy of hell and eternal condemnation.' I clearly understood that, if I should depart from this world in that condition, I would certainly be lost, condemned just as surely as I then sat in the church pew. But I also received grace to accept the words of absolution unto forgiveness, by virtue of the words and promises of Jesus, an assurance based on His bloody atonement and confirmed in Holy Communion. Since that day I have, by the power of God, and in spite of errors and much wavering, been preserved unto salvation."

After his conversion Schartau came near entering upon a by-way, but he soon realized his danger. The side-course was that of the Moravian Brethren. Concerning his experience with this movement he says,

"Like one who physically partakes of food without nourishment I became spiritually enervated. My peace of soul wavered, and I lacked strength unto victory, although I had not capitulated nor surrendered my weapons." Schartau did not yield but came out victorious, though his struggle was intense. "The hope anchored in redemption alone remained," he says. His internal agony was so severe that he scarcely found peace to write his sermons, and he feared that he would never again find any peace in this life, but God led him in the true course.

It lay in the nature of the case, and in the nature of the person, that Schartau could not feel at home among the Moravians. His manly personality naturally reacted against a too pronounced emotionalism. Then again his deep, strong longing for righteousness made it impossible for him to dwell in tabernacles where the urge of the Christian religion toward holy living was so little emphasized. Hence, Schartau became an uncompromising opponent to a movement that had for some time rather strongly attracted him. He was even stronger in his criticism than J. A. Bengel, with whom he was spiritually related. Schartau was somewhat given to "sternness and exaggeration," according to his own words, and he probably went too far in his opposition. He had gotten in touch with the Moravian movement rather at its worse than better manifestations, and it was a peculiarity with him to generalize and make fast rules on the premises of a few individual observations.

Now and then he did make acknowledgement of phenomena which he could not entirely approve. For

instance, he paid a tribute to the great Norwegian lay reformer, Hauge. After he had read the third part of Hauge's biography, he said, "I have not found anything in contradiction to the Word of God, nothing to indicate the lack of true faith. Indeed, I have here and there found bright sparks of Biblical understanding giving good hope of the man's personal spirituality." Had he known Hauge better, he would doubtless have found somewhat of the spiritual relationship, which in his time he so sorely missed and so ardently longed for. His was a lofty spiritual ideal, to which he gives the following expression in one of his letters, "A right-minded soul, who will not veneer his stony heart with the blood of Christ, nor use His cross as a crutch while he limps along on the broad way, a person who will not take refuge in the wounds of Jesus against the reproofs of the Holy Spirit — behold, this is my friend."

Schartau was friendly to the German pietism, though he clearly saw its deterioration from the lofty beginnings of Spener and Francke. He fully appreciated the merits of these great leaders. The author whom he valued most of all, however, was Luther. He always recommended Luther next to the Bible, and he considered the Postil as the best of all the works of the great Reformer. If we are to estimate Schartau aright, we must not overlook his great esteem, not to say enthusiasm, for Luther. We find here more than due respect for the Father of our Church; there was direct spiritual kinship, which should disapprove every effort to place Schartau on some sideline in relation to Luther and his spiritual descendants. These men were indeed

different, and Schartau did not reach up to the lofty heights of Luther's position of influence, but they were alike wedded to the Word and aflame with holy fire. Schartau indeed felt that his own talent was supplemented by the concentrated power of Luther's talents. If he had lived to see his own writings in print, he would doubtless, like his best followers, have recommended Luther in the first place also by reason of this supplementary relation, not to say that it would have been impossible for him to recommend his own books, for he did not wish to supplant the Book of books. "Without borrowing the popularity of the press, the Lord will make our name known where He desires to use our work." Such were his sentiments.

Next to Luther, Schartau placed John Arndt, also his own earlier contemporary M. F. Roos. Concerning the latter he said, "An extraordinary spiritual enlightenment is everywhere in evidence, and one here learns much in the knowledge of God not found elsewhere." Roos was an expositor, while Schartau was given to systematize. Schartau indeed went deep into the mine of Holy Scripture, he brought out great treasures and thus built up his discourses, but he could not like Roos or Luther bring all the content of his text into his sermon. He became a Bible theologian, however, not only by reason of the fact that he taught in agreement with the Scriptures, but because he himself lived in the Spirit pervading the sacred Book. He was even criticised for minimizing the value of other books, but he defended himself in the following characteristic words, "It is not my intention to limit a preacher's reading to the Scriptures alone. On the contrary, I deem it very useful

to consult other books that are Scriptural and that give both edification and relief from the burdens of official care. Such procedure obviates the danger of drifting into a merely professional reading of the Bible, which leaves the floral buds therein to escape notice, while the writings of orthodox men develop them without tearing asunder their petals and leaves. The spiritual gift conferred upon these authors is conveyed to every reader whose heart is open to truth where ever found. The faithful steward finds wholesome humiliation in comparing his five talents with the ten talents of the other, and he praises the Giver of both. Without being discontented with his own lesser gifts, he endeavors to replenish them from the greater abundance he thus finds. It is entirely useful to refresh one's own gift with the gifts of others, but there is an equally great danger of imbibing the germs of error found in books of adulterated learning. One's own supply ebbs away while one is thus laboring to increase it, and one's spiritual vision is darkened in the midst of misleading lights. A heart thus 'enlightened' deceives itself by means of intensified emotions, and it deceives others by means of an undue zeal. When the Holy Scriptures are left to occupy the seat of honor and other writings are used as their footstool, then Scriptural learning will be dominating in one's preaching without debasing one to copy the methods or indiosyncrasies of any particular school. One may then emulate the gifts of others without deviating from one's own high pattern."

Schartau at Work.

When Schartau entered into his ministry, he promised the Lord that he would fight for the kingdom of God as long as he could stand upright and, if he should eventually, by reason of human infirmity, be unable to stand, he would struggle on his knees in prayer until God gave him new strength. He would not rest until God gave him rest in the grave. This promise he certainly redeemed throughout his pastoral life. He served the Lord with unswerving fidelity, according to the gifts he had received. Even in secular matters he showed a like trustworthiness, and was an exceptionally able official. He lived up to his own ideal: "an official should in his ministry depend on the laws alone, without needing the supervision or indulgence of any man." It was by reason of this character that he early became provost of his district.

We find his program in the probation address delivered on the Third Sunday in Advent, 1793. He takes up the criticism that in his ministry he was said to represent the law. "Yes, I have preached law, and I will preach it as long as God gives me strength to move my tongue. The Chief Shepherd Himself preached law, and so did His apostles. So I, too, have preached the law, though I well know that no man shall be justified by the works of the law, but I have not endeavored to retain contrite hearts under the threats of the law. I have preached the law as a tutor unto Christ. It has been my sincere desire, so far as possible, to tear down the kingdom of Satan from the very bottom. I have been desirous of threatening

the obdurate sinner, that his conscience might be awakened. I have endeavored to snatch away from him his crutches and every support, in order that he might realize his utter helplessness and listen to the call of the gospel, and that the comfort of the Holy Spirit might find room in his heart.

“It may be that some are of the opinion that I have been too stern. If this were so, I could truthfully say that I have striven to be like Paul, saying, ‘For whether we are beside ourselves,* it is unto God, or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you.’ I fear that my Lord may judge differently, namely that I have in most cases been too lenient, but then I also wish to say, ‘If we have been too lenient, we have been so also unto the Lord.’”

Forty years of Schartau's work was done in the university city of Lund, and this became a lofty candlestick for his light. “I deem it extraordinarily important,” he says, “that I have been called to work among you, in the midst of university life. I have noticed how several of the students have broken through every hindrance and come to hear the Word of God. Would that some of these who are to go out from this nursery of learning to occupy prominent places as teachers, judges, and other officials may retain and bring to fruitage the seeds of God's Word here sown! How great a blessing this would be! Oh, the joy for me to witness this in the day that shall make everything known!

“This morning when I saw the dawn heralding a

* “We are too stern,” according to the old Swedish version.

new day of grace, I thought of Peter's words, 'We have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' "

"I deeply desire that these words may be fulfilled in your hearts. Indeed, the Lord has brought them to fulfillment in many a heart, and I have had the indescribable pleasure of seeing the Word of God now and then prove fruitful." In this connection he makes special mention of the young people whom he had instructed and confirmed; but he also drew a like inference from the opposition and ignominy he had suffered, namely, that the word he had preached had shown its power. "My preaching has been censured and scoffed at. I do not say this to give vent to any bitterness. On the contrary, I wish that God might enlighten these poor people. They would then realize that they have spoken against, not the preacher only, but against his Lord. Nevertheless, it is awful to think that the Word of God becomes a savor unto death to some, though this too proves that it is not fruitless. I therefore hope that it has accomplished far more than has come to my notice, and that some may overcome their natural timidity and make my heart glad with their confession of what God has done for them."

We shall also quote a part of the peroration of this speech, which so well sets forth the program which Schartau carried out in his ministry. "God be praised for all the Word of God which has here been preached! Yea, His be the honor, for if it has at any time been done with enlightenment, the light has come from Him,

who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' If it has been done with emphasis, the great power has come from God, not from ourselves. The Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ be eternally praised, who has brought His great victory to fruitage in several hearts, having led them out of error and the darkness of sin to the true knowledge of the Son of God! Some of these are already singing His praise in glory, and others, still left among us, shall eventually thank Him for ever."

Referring to the question of Schartau's legalistic tendency, he protested, even on his death-bed and in view of the great reckoning before him, that he had not been a legalistic preacher. "In the workshop of a goldsmith we find not only polishing soap, but also hammers and tongs with which the material is being worked and fashioned. So too, I have spoken not only that which has been pleasing, but also words conducive to discipline. I know that, to the praise of God, I have been able in due time to speak words of comfort to the weary." Schartau was afraid to prescribe narrower boundaries to the grace of God than those outlined by God Himself, but he was also afraid to make them wider. If he erred, he rather emphasized the former danger, though he feared both. In his catechism Schartau says concerning the Saviour that He is such that if a soul but turn to Him, he becomes a child of God, even though he has not in any real sense shown a childlike obedience to God.

Schartau makes a distinction between the assurance unto confession and the assurance unto faith. The

former is a special gift of grace, while the latter belongs to the normal life of a believer. He finds the latter assurance even in the very first sprout of faith, as a hidden beginning, for it belongs to the essence of true faith, though at first this has the character of incessant waiting for grace and but gradually develops into a conscious assurance of grace obtained. "As soon as the assurance found in the Word of God is conveyed to a human heart, so that one believes the promises of God, there is real faith, even though it be a faith that but waits for the forgiveness of sins."

In his psychological diagnoses of men, Schartau looked for certain tokens indicating the gradual steps of inner development, and some suspected that he thus hampered their spiritual advancement. To these Schartau replied, "May I then say a word or two concerning my Saviour. I know of no other comfort than that which comes from the Scriptural promises and from the agony of my Saviour. I know of no other cleansing than that which, according to the Word of God, is wrought by His blood of atonement. I know of no other assurance [note here the ground of assurance] than that which, in accordance with the Word of God, rests upon the merits of Christ's obedience. I know of no other power than that which, through the Word and Holy Communion, comes from Him who was crucified in weakness but lives in the power of God. I know of no other joy than that of the assurance by the Word of God that I am a disciple of Jesus in spite of my ignorance and foolishness; that I am a child of God in spite of my faults; that I shall be preserved

unto salvation in spite of my shortcomings; and all of this for the sake of my Saviour alone."

Schartau is famous for his outlines. They are usually quite extensive and can be read unto edification by those who are able to follow the trend of thought. Without losing this, Schartau here launched out on the depths of thought and faith and life. It is marvellous how he could extempore sustain himself in such depths. Annotations from some who heard him indicate that his oral discourse was on a par with his written outlines.

According to A. G. Rudelbach, Schartau is the greatest theologian Sweden has produced. His chief contribution lies within the Third Article of the Creed. He made distinct advancement in his psychological studies in Christian experience and life. To a certain extent he has a system of his own. He was a born thinker and systematizer.

We may for example call attention to his analysis of the stage of calling in the order of grace, his observation of the repeated processes in the knowledge of sin, or his differentiations of the enlightenment by the gospel, distinguishing the offers of grace, and the joy perceived for a while but soon disappearing, from faith itself and its abiding fellowship with God, with or without emotions. His observations show that faith rises out of the hidden depths of spiritual poverty. Schartau wished to have reason converted and sanctified, but not annihilated. He wished to walk in obedience to the Spirit, but he wished to walk with open eyes. He therefore rather disliked the obscurity of mysticism, though he was not a stranger to its deep spirituality.

It is worthy of observation that there are no polemics in Schartau's sermons, except against sins, wherever found or however clad, whether in pure materialism, impure spirituality, or lifeless ecclesiasticism and orthodoxy. He looked upon the temple as a sanctuary, and altogether too holy a place for speculations or for making it an arena for doctrinal warfare. In one of his homiletical outlines he enunciates the principle that a preacher must avoid quarreling on the pulpit. There must be no strange fires on the Lord's altar, nor in His pulpit — a principle which must have cost Schartau himself much effort at self-control.

Another remarkable fact is that Schartau rarely antagonizes individual, external sins. He feared taking away the mote where he could not likewise remove the beam, to bring about an external whitewashing without an internal conversion.

We have on record from his pen at least one temperance sermon, dealing specifically with this subject. Schartau was severe in his condemnation of drunkenness. He also strongly disapproved moderate drinking. A Christian should not only be sober, abstaining from excessive drinking, which is self-evident, but he should abstain to such an extent that the temper of his mind be not altered by the use of drink.

It is evident that Schartau's strongly marked personality had a language of its own. His style is not smooth and easy flowing, but powerful like himself. The spiritual authority with which he appeared by reason of his certainty of a higher calling naturally found expression in his language. Every sentence is clear-cut and well balanced, as if dictated with a special

purpose. There is great weight and a certain ruggedness to his style, well adapted to his thoughts, just as Charles XII was more fittingly dressed in his great top-boots than he would have been in velvet slippers. "The bride of Christ needs no mirror to adorn herself," he said. The beauty of truth was his objective. When the content of his discourse so demanded, Schartau could rise to a very lofty plane. His language then became like a mighty chorale. The speaker then became an orator and spoke like a prophet of God.

Schartau has had many followers. He became the father of a movement known as "Schartauism," a mode of churchliness and preaching, which characterizes southern and western Sweden. This branch of the Church of Sweden is purely evangelical Lutheran, and the churches are there regularly well filled with devout worshipers. In this way Schartau's influence has been a bulwark against both rationalism and reformed secterianism, and it has grown from generation to generation.

Schartau's Personality.

Schartau's successor, Achatius Kahl, a Swedenborgian, who lived on into the eighties, described his impression on seeing the dead body of Schartau in the following words, "His eyes bore testimony to the stability of his faith, his pale lips to the power of prayer, and his open forehead to the upright purpose of his heart." If the impression of his dead body could have been such, what must not that of the living Schartau have been? We may characterize him in his own words, descriptive of one of his followers and of the essentials

of every true servant of the Lord, "An eye that looks straight forward and a heart that is aflame with the love of Christ." His heart was thus aflame. He moved straight forward and tolerated no crooked sidelines nor compromises, straight forward, whether it was pleasant or grievous, whether men were with him or against him. He had an eye single to the will of God. He was a spiritual knight without fear. "The least of my faults is that of fear," he said. He bore his head high among men, but he humbled himself before God, and he could also acknowledge his faults before men.

Schartau admitted that he was by nature "prone to be authoritative and bent toward sternness, exaggeration, and assertiveness," but Assar Lindeblad, his first biographer, says that "with his dominating Christian disposition Schartau suppressed every human weakness into the background of his great personality, so that he gave the impression of an entirely harmonious, healthy, vigorous, and independent Christian character. — In my early youth I learned to admire the sublime man, and frequently since then his personality has stood before me with the imperishable beauty of a saint. There was balance, poise, and dignity to his manner and speech, the lofty calm, and the pure harmony which antique art was wont to attribute to its heroes."

In his catechism Schartau ascribes to God among other attributes also that of independence or self-sufficiency, and he describes this in the following way, "God is of Himself, He depends on no one, nor can anyone influence Him against His will, for He is in need of no one." It is evident that something similar should appear in every man of God. With his marked

independence Schartau would not tolerate any coercive influence upon conscience. He condemned every effort "to lord it over the Church of God, in which every member has a faith that overcometh the world, and is not to be ruled by any vain threats, nor to be driven by any staff of frail reed." It is evident, however, that people naturally yielded to so dominating a personality as that of Schartau. Even his most intimate friends, Professors Florman and Holmbergsson, never addressed him with the familiar "Thou," but said, "Prosten" ("The Provost"). It was inevitable, and yet Schartau believed in the adage, "Live and let live." He wished every Christian to be free and independent. "The Freedom of a Christian Man" was to him not only a letter but an experience, and yet he recognized that there is no absolute freedom here on earth. Our freedom must be limited to be retained. He defined freedom as "an ability to follow the inclination of one's heart and to enjoy earthly pleasures without sacrificing one's deeper spiritual joy."

"A person whose labor is well pleasing to God must suffer opprobrium and psecution," he said on his death-bed, "while those who are not acceptable to the Lord may feast on the praise of men." He knew whereof he spoke. In the midst of fiery assaults upon his person, he retained a cool, Stoic calm, which indeed always rested upon him. It was a token of the eternal peace of soul which he enjoyed by reason of his assurance of the presence and grace of God.

It was characteristic of him that he emphasized a faithful discharge of secular duties. When Kirkegaard, in protest against a merely official form of Christianity,

said, "We must return to the cloister which Luther abandoned," Schartau would say, "Not to the cloister, but to your vocation and, first of all, to a true conversion, that you may become a new man and as such enter into your labor." This is a genuine Lutheran thought. It has found a new expression in our Swedish Church as a protest against undue "spirituality" at the expense of loyalty in one's plain, every-day duties. Schartau recognized two poles in our temporal life, a negative and a positive. The former is earthly and is lesser in comparison with the eternal, constituting the "many things" in comparison with "the one thing needful." It has a dangerous attraction, and many a heart is thus drawn from God. Here we need watchfulness and prayer and sacrifice. But our earthly life has a positive side also, offering opportunities for the service of God. We have the same Lord in our daily vocation as in our Sunday worship. "So far as I am concerned," said Schartau on his deathbed, "it matters not whether I live or die, whether I am on the one side among the living or on the other side among the dead: my name is written in the Book of Life." The boundaries between the temporal and eternal, between the old and new earth, here disappear. The grace of God, like the vault of heaven, embraces both: to serve God is the one thing needful, whether it be done humbly on earth, or gloriously in heaven. Such service sanctifies and elevates our earthly life, even our most humble labor, and we must abstain from everything that cannot be thus sanctified and ennobled.

Schartau was distinctively Swedish, and the movement that bears his name is at heart national. There

is something genuinely Swedish about his personality, something typical of our people in their characteristic harmonizing of opposites, of courage and tenderness, of grave earnestness in harmony with deep joy, and of cheerfulness with an underlying seriousness and even a streak of melancholy, with unyielding independence joined with guiltless obedience. We may even find in Schartau something in complete harmony with natural Swedish environment, something like the silent, majestic pine forests and like the solid and immovable mountains, something like the broad fields with their edging ridges.

There was something fundamentally manly and serious about Schartau, but there was also a deep-lying streak of almost feminine gentleness and charity.

“His was an art, known by but few,
Of being strong and gentle too.”

This art Schartau had learned of his Master, who was the strongest and most gentle of all. He was kind to those that suffered or were in need and especially sympathetic to those who were spiritually “laboring and heavy laden”. He could literally “weep with those that wept.” Like his Master he was a friend of publicans and sinners. “If you have the glad assurance that the great Advocate with the Father is on your side, you can well afford to be charitable to your brethren.” Schartau had an open eye for the true and beautiful in human life. He was by no means averse to culture. He enjoyed to spend a moment or two with learned and cultured men, and was able to sustain an interesting conversation with them, for he did not

lack broad humanitarian knowledge. He had an abundance of witticisms and anecdotes. Now and then he found diversion in playing his violin, and in his earlier life he even arranged musical evening entertainments. It is an interesting fact that even the aged Provost could take exercise on his skates and enjoy himself with his young people.

In a sermon on the Gospel for Sexagesima he outlines the religious and moral ideas of Christianity on the basis of the Decalogue; tracing the development that belongs to the ages of spiritual childhood, youth, and the fathers. His description of the spiritual fathers is a good characterization of Schartau himself, and we shall quote a few words.

“A person who has attained the stability of the spiritual fathers is not only free from coercion as are the children in faith, nor from the fear of men as are the youths, but he knows how to deal wisely even with the worldly minded, not defying and yet resisting them. He is not only hopeful of obtaining grace as are the spiritual children, nor of obtaining assurance in God’s promises without needing the support of either comfort or spiritual joy. He has not only the will and ability to obey the commandments of God, but he is aware of his advancement in both respects, and he knows that he loves God.

“A father in faith not only does not take the Name of the Lord in vain, but he speaks concerning God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He not only prays with childlike confidence and thanks God with burning zeal, but he praises God and glorifies His Name. He ventures to deal with God boldly, taking for granted

that he is being heard, like one confidently conversing with a friend. He keeps the Lord's day holy. He not only uses the Word of God, but he applies it to both himself and others, and at times he is granted the enjoyment of celestial rest. He is humble without seeming to be so. He is not only contented with the precedence of others and satisfied with his own humble estate, but he would be satisfied to descend even deeper into humility, if this were God's will. He keeps aloof from the overcrowded places of honor and does not desire earthly exaltation; he is even pained if he should at any time become the object of undue praise. He can patiently endure continued insult and do favor to an enemy without reminding him of former injury. He not only does not lend his approval to sin nor yields to it, but his dignified earnestness repels the depravity of men. He avoids the dangers of temptation and makes himself chaste by means of mental self-control.

"Earthly goods do not captivate a mind that has seen the vision of heavenly riches, and yet a real father in faith values both. He uses the former with a heavenly mind. He fears deception and rejoices in truth and uses worldly wisdom carefully like a two-edged sword. He speaks of the absent in a way that merits the approval of their friends. He apologizes for the erring ones and prays for them. He hates sin, but not the sinner. Sinful depravity has lost control over him, and indeed much of its power, and the new man in him has reached noticeable development. He has the mind of Christ and walks even as He walked. He longs for the second advent of his Saviour, as a final, complete manifestation of His glory. He is fit to be

a means in the hands of God and can, by learning, comfort, and admonition, preserve others from falling away from the Lord.”

A Remarkable Prayer.

The following characteristic prayer by Schartau is found in the Church Book in Bjellerup.

“O Lord of heaven and earth, I praise Thee that Thou hast opened to one of the least of Thy servants, and one of the most unprofitable, the door of this sheepfold, yea, that in this congregation Thou hast opened the hearts of some, so that by Thy grace and goodness I have been enabled to see firstfruits of my labor in the fold which Thou hast intrusted to me. Thou hast thereby, O Lord, encouraged me at times when I became weary and refreshed me at times when I grew tired. Angels praise Thee, O Lord, and songs of the redeemed resound around Thy throne, but Thou dost also listen to the sighing of the poor, coming as it does from the depths of earthly need. Grant that Thy servant may present a petition before Thine all-seeing eye, and hear me for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and my Saviour, yea, my Lord and Master, who also intercedes for me when, under the guidance of Thy Holy Spirit, I now offer my humble prayer. Protect Thy servant, O Lord, that I may not depart from Thee, for I am relying on Thy faithfulness to me and Thy love to the congregation which Thou hast purchased with the blood of Thy Son, lest, if the shepherd be smitten, the sheep of the fold might be scattered abroad. Dear Father, preserve, through Thy Holy Spirit, those from evil whom Thou hast given to Thy

Son for an inheritance, lest in trials, in the furnace of affliction, they deny the Lord who has bought them. And when this hand of mine no longer writes on these pages, then, O Thou Lord of the harvest, send a faithful laborer into this harvest, that he may water it with the unadulterated Word of God, that the seed here sown may not die. Search his heart mightily by Thy Holy Spirit and indue him with Thy grace that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together before Thy throne in glory, there to join in the songs of praise of those who, by the ministry of either, shall have been converted from the idols to the living God. Amen."

Schartau's Sickness and Death.

A few annotations from Schartau's final sickness cast a halo of light about his personality. His last utterances come with the clearness of eternity. It seemed as though he had already "entered into the joy of his Lord," before he left his earthly tabernacle with its grievous pain. "I have never been so happy before," he said, "I am sixty-seven years old, but I have never been so happy before. My lips praise Thee! For my own part it matters not whether I live or die. My name is in the Book of Life, and my Saviour says far more emphatically than Pilate, 'What I have written, I have written.'" His assurance of faith certainly rested upon a firm foundation, but he had his battles to fight to the very last. "The devil has tried to make my deathbed narrow, but Jesus faced him and made an end of his efforts. God is a God in time of need. I have been in the fray and have been victorious, because Jesus had been there before me and had come out victorious."

"The most excellent of all is when I can say, 'Praise and thanks and glory be to God.' It is more delightful than if my physician could make an extract from every apothecary's shop in Sweden. If I should die of pure thanksgiving, I could get no better death." He died February 3, 1825, not *of* thanksgiving, but *with* thanksgiving, and a better and more beautiful death he could not have had.

His contemporaries could not appraise Schartau aright. Distance in space and time has furnished the proper historical perspective and enabled one to make a more just evaluation. Schartau rises higher and higher in the proportion that Swedish church history is being clarified. A recent evidence of this is that in 1913 the Swedish Academy coined a memorial with Henric Schartau's name and picture, and simultaneously incorporated his biography into its proceedings. On the opposite side the coin bears the picture of a shepherd with his flock and with the following inscription:

"Pastor sedulus ille gregis verusque magister."

"He was a faithful shepherd of his flock and a true teacher." The acknowledgement of God strengthened and gladdened Schartau himself and has followed upon his work "unto the third and fourth generation" and, indeed, will follow it much longer.

The comparatively simple stone slab at the head of Schartau's grave bears the following inscription: "But I have therefore not fled from Thee, my Shepherd, nor have I desired the applause of men, Thou knowest; what I have preached is right before Thee." This epi-

taph fits the man, but there are living stones that speak better still, the many souls who through Schartau's ministry have been won for the living God.

“His tongue is silenced, but his spirit speaketh
A mighty language, which no silence knows.
How many a heart he comforted in sadness,
How many erring souls to God he shows!
He sowed the Word of God, whose fruits shall ripen
Into a harvest of eternal praise;
He saw it not — this fruitful harvest whiten —
He sees it garnered by the Hand of Grace.

O, it is beautiful to live and labor
The work of God as he the lifelong day!
God's hosts of angels, holy, wise, and mighty
Are camping lovingly around his grave.
His memory liveth, yea, shall live for ever,
Deeply inscribed upon many a heart;
His gentle, mighty spirit here shall linger
And from old Carolina* ne'er depart.

C. A. HEUMAN.

* The university and the City of Lund.

I.

In The Name of Jesus Christ

Christmas Sermon, 1787.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1. 14.

Introduction.

Behold the man is become as one of us.

Thus God spoke to the first man, after he had fallen into sin, but also had received a promise of reparation through the woman's seed, who should bruise the serpent's head. In the previous verse we read that God had made for Adam and his wife coats of skin, which doubtless had been taken from a sacrificed animal, the first type of the great sacrifice of atonement. They now stood before God, externally clothed in the bloody garb of the sacrificial lamb and internally clothed in the bloody righteousness of the Saviour, who should come in the fulness of time and shed His blood and give His life in death. God now points at them and says, "Behold, the man is become as one of us" (Gen. 3. 22).

God did not speak scornfully, for it is below His dignity to scoff at an unfortunate creature. Neither did He speak reproachfully, for He had already chosen

a Helper, who should provide such a remedy that there would be no room for reproach. When God reconciled the world unto Himself, He did not reckon unto them their trespasses. No, God spoke lovingly, then as always. Man had aspired to be like God, in a measure and manner that could not be, and he thus cast himself into sin and wretchedness, but God took pity upon him and provided other ways and means, whereby man should be able to regain such likeness unto God as can be attained by man. Human nature should be united with one of the Godhead. A son of man should become a Son of God. The human nature of the Saviour should be exalted to the majesty and perfection of God. As John the Baptist pointed at the Saviour and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God," so God pointed at Adam, who was a prototype of Christ, the second Adam, pointed out "the mystery of godliness," that God should be "manifested in the flesh," and said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us."

Just as human nature in Christ became a partaker of the majesty of the Godhead, so God likewise in Christ appropriated human nature and its characteristics; and so we, human beings, may apply these words to ourselves and say concerning Christ, the second Adam, "Behold, God has become as one of us," and this is to be our theme to-day.

God Like One of Us.

We are then to show, first, that God has become like one of us and, secondly, to point out the salvation that lies therein.

First Part.

God has become like one of us in person. Our text says, "The Word became flesh." The self-existing Word, which was God Himself, became flesh, that is, appropriated human nature, which in the Scriptures is called flesh. The evangelist had previously and in a splendid manner described this Word. "In the beginning was the Word etc. — The Word became flesh." The incomprehensible divine Being revealed Himself even to the bodily senses, so that He could be seen like another man, Himself also being a real man. "We beheld His glory." But there was in Him, as any one mindful to see and to think might well observe, something more than the transient glory which wretched, powerless human beings may possess and bring forth. "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." The infinite God, who has no limitations, and whose perfections are self-sufficient and without measure, has entered into union with a finite, limited being, whose life terminates in death, and whom God measures with a span. The Eternal, who was in the beginning, the everlasting God, began to be a man when the Word became flesh. Almighty God, through whom all things are made, became united with a human being, whom He had Himself formed from that which does not appear. "Without Him was not anything made that has been made." He, in whom was life, and who gives life to every living thing, began to live here as a man and closed his life by dying as a man. The Word became flesh. In Him also as a man was fulfilled the word, "All flesh is grass."

God became as one of us with reference to dwelling, "And dwelt among us." He lived as we do in this world and found Himself in the wretched conditions appertaining to this life. He had previously, from the creation of man, dwelt among us as a man. The first abode of this King of Glory was a stable. Thereupon He lived in a poor carpenter's cottage, and eventually He became like a beggar, without any fixed abode. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head." Nevertheless He endured such a life more than thirty years. Some who enter into this world immediately take their departure and close their day long before evening. Some attain the medium span of life. He dwelt under the vault of heaven on His journey to Egypt, where He lived some time as a stranger. He lived in Nazareth among godless people. He spent days and nights in the desert and occasionally spent his nights on some mountain in prayer. He journeyed on the sea and sought repose in the ship. Finally His body found rest in the grave, while His soul entered into the abode of eternal peace. In short, there are no circumstances nor conditions belonging to this present life in which the Son of God has not become like one of us, except one, that, while He was true man, He was not a sinner. He was a man, "Being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man."

Second Part.

We are here to point out the blessedness which lies in the fact that God has become as one of us.

This blessedness is contained in the words "full of

grace and truth." As the glory revealed in Christ was from God, so also are grace and truth infinitely great and divine, eternal and unfailing. "We beheld His glory, glory of the only begotten from the Father."

It was the glory which the Son of God had with the Father from eternity, by virtue of His eternal birth of the Father, the glory of the only begotten Son. This glory was revealed on several occasions in the life of Jesus. It was seen by men, in a real though not absolute sense, "glory *as* of the only begotten." At His birth, it was seen by shepherds though they were men of low degree. "The glory of the Lord shone round about them," when the angel of the Lord brought them "good tidings of great joy." The glory thus revealed was full of grace, for the angel made the proclamation, "Be not afraid: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people." It was also portrayed in the angels' song of praise,

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace
Among men in whom He is well pleased."

This glory was also full of truth, for the truth of the Messianic promises now became confirmed through their fulfillment, from the first promise given in paradise, concerning the woman's Seed which should bruise the serpent's head, to the last proclaimed by Malachi, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple," for, said the angel, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." In the angels' message and song of praise was verified the prophetic rhapsody of Isaiah:

“Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth,
And break forth into singing, O mountains:
For the Lord hath comforted His people,
And will have compassion upon His afflicted.”

The glory of Jesus appeared on several occasions during His humiliation, especially in His miracles, but it nevertheless shone most brightly in His death, when “He was despised and rejected of men.” Then His glory shone brightly into the eyes of the centurion, who, though he was a blind heathen, saw the glory of the only begotten Son, and said, “Truly this was the Son of God.” Upon His resurrection Jesus reclaimed the full use of His divine glory, but it was only His friends who could now and at His ascension see His glory. Nevertheless it was full of grace and truth whenever and to whomsoever it appeared. Grace was thereby procured, and the truth from heaven confirmed.

God has become as one of us, and therefore we need not become like one of the devils. When man acquiesced in the will of the devil he became like the fallen angel. The Satanic image was impressed on the human soul. Man became likeminded with the devil and began to love evil as he does. Man was therefore destined to receive the same unblessed abode and the same frightful reward as the devil, since his works were like those of the devil; but, “To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” By virtue of the fact that God became as one of us, came to the earth and dwelt among us, paid our debts, suffered for our sins, and fulfilled the law, there is wrought a wonderful transformation. The Spirit of

God is by the Word sent into our hearts, the image of the evil one is destroyed in the new birth, we are justified and delivered from the power of the devil and from eternal condemnation, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham."

God became as one of us, and therefore we may become like one of the Godhead. The Son of God appropriated human nature, and therefore we "may become partakers of the divine nature." The Son of God became a man, "in all things made like unto His brethren," though He was "The effulgence of God's glory, and the very image of His substance"; and therefore the image of God, lost in the fall, can be restored in us, when we become "conformed to the image of His son." Atonement required such likeness. "It behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be merciful and a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." When the Saviour made this propitiation, God considered Him as one of us, like us even in matters where, in Himself, He was not like us; in order that we should by God be considered like Jesus, even in matters where we were otherwise entirely unlike Him. "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on

our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

A person who has attained such likeness to Christ, "who is the image of God," will by virtue thereof attain an even greater likeness to Him in the day of His coming. Concerning this John the apostle writes, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall then see Him even as He is." On that day the supreme likeness of the saints to their Saviour shall extend even to their bodies. "We wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself."

Application.

Can you, my dear listeners, say, as John did, "We beheld His glory?" The blind cannot see, neither can those who are sleeping. Are your thoughts blind and is your heart asleep to all this gracious glory? Do you not, even now when we commemorate the Saviour's birth, perceive the blessedness which was revealed, when God became as one of us? Do you not know of any other blessedness at Christmas than that of eating and drinking and that of earthly pleasures? You are then wasting your days of grace, you are remaining in the unblest condition from which Jesus would save you. He became like you in order that you should not become like the devils, but you have made yourself thus by

breaking the covenant and dissolving the fellowship with God entered into in holy baptism. You have surrendered to Satan to do his will and to be of his mind. You have done this by opposing God and continuing in sin. Do you not see that you have become like the devil, for "He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning?" "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do." What else can you then expect than that which the devil himself anticipates with fear and trembling, "a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries"? Nevertheless, the very salvation of which you are unmindful still awaits you, to be gained, if you but heed its call and seek thereafter while it is yet to be obtained. If you perceive a somewhat clearer glimpse of your unblessedness, oh, this is a beam of the glory of the only begotten Son, full of grace and truth. Be concerned that, by the Word of God, you may better understand the heavenly truth which has begun to enlighten your darkened mind. The power of the Word which you feel entering your heart is an earnest of God's grace. Accept it, and pray that you may receive more. Keep that which you have received, lest it too be lost.

But someone says, "I am not entirely blind, but still I cannot see the glory of grace in Jesus. I can see nothing but my sins with their ugliness and condemnation." Bless the Lord that you have been thus enlightened, to begin with, and continue to pray as David did,

“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold
Wondrous things out of Thy law.”

Look longingly for the glory of Jesus, which He has revealed in His Word; look for the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. The time will come, when you shall be able to confess with the congregation of true believers, “We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The Son of God has taken upon Himself to suffer the unblestness and distress from which you are suffering and to become like you therein, in order that you may attain the great glory of becoming like Him. Jesus is willing and able to reveal His glory to precisely such an one as you, for the mercy which He shows and the salvation which He confers will in such as you redound to His praise. Do not forget the hidden delight which you have already experienced, because God has become as one of us. Cherish the new hope thus enkindled that all may work together for good.

When I look for those who can say, “We beheld His glory,” there doubtless is here present some one who can say, “Yes, in the glory of God’s commandments I saw my perverted life, my corrupted heart, and the punishment I had merited, but the Lord also opened the eyes of my understanding to the “Light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,” and I saw, not with carnal eyes nor in illusive visions, but in the clear gospel I saw, as clearly and certainly as ever I could see with my bodily eyes, that God became a man even for me, that Christ had by God been considered as a sinner; and so I believe that, for His sake, I am considered

righteous as He, and renewed to His likeness, and I can now hope to become like Him in eternal honor and glory." — "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see!" But beware, lest the spirit of the world may obscure this glory, or the heat of passion may darken the brightness which the eye of faith has acquired by beholding the glory of the only begotten Son of God. Remember that there still remains in you somewhat of the image of Satan, which Jesus overthrew when He delivered you out of the power of darkness. Fight the good fight to obliterate every trait of the evil one, and make it your earnest endeavor to become more and more like Him, who for that purpose became like you. Amen.

II.

New Year's Day Sermon.

Introduction.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.

This is the commandment which Joseph of Nazareth received from an angel concerning the name of the Son which should be born of the Virgin Mary. The words are recorded by Matthew (1. 21).

The name Jesus means a Saviour. Mary's Son should be a Saviour, and therefore He should receive this name. He should save, not only provide postponement of the punishment for sins, nor alleviate the anguish for sins, but He should save His people.

It was to His people that this salvation should be granted. When we learn that Jesus should be a Saviour from sins, we are also enabled to understand what sort of a people it was that He should save, namely, a people of sinners. But where is there a people without sins? It was, then, the whole human race which constituted this people. For this reason Jesus is not called the son of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, but the Son of Man. He came to save the human race in general.

The Saviour should grant salvation from the very greatest want and distress, for He should save His

people from their *sins*, from the transgressions of God's law, from God's wrath, and from the perdition of the soul. He should grant a perfect salvation, so that the punishment for sins should be remitted, the sinful desires be overcome, and the very seat of corruption be eventually uprooted, for He should be a Saviour from sins.

Mark this, O sinner, that this benefaction consists in salvation *from* sins. Jesus is not a Saviour *unto* sin. He has not in His redemption given us license to sin. Nor is He a Saviour *in* sin, remitting the punishment, but leaving a person in the bonds of sin. No, He is a Saviour *from* sins, to the end that the sins shall be abandoned when forgiven, and that the conquering power of Jesus' resurrection shall overcome the sinful desires, when the comforting power of His suffering and atonement shall overcome the pangs of conscience, for Jesus is a Saviour from sins.

I propose to develop this matter still further and to point out the comfort which is obtainable in the Saviour's name, but let us first pray that even on this occasion He may be unto us a Saviour, so that the Word of God which shall be spoken may work unto salvation, that the bondservants of sin may desire Him unto deliverance and flee to Him for refuge, and that by Him they may be granted eternal salvation. To this end let us unite in the Lord's prayer, "Our Father, etc."

Proposition.

OUR COMFORT IN THE NAME OF THE SAVIOUR.

1. The comfort obtainable in the name of Jesus, the Saviour.
2. How this comfort can be obtained.

First Part.

We are here to speak of the comfort that can be obtained in the name of Jesus, the Saviour.

The comfort lies principally in the reference of the evangelist to the fact that this name had been given to our Saviour by the angel, who announced to Mary that she should give birth to a Son, for then was also announced that Jesus should possess such attributes as would enable Him to be a Saviour from sins, according to the interpretation of His name given to Joseph and set forth in our introduction. When Gabriel the angel announced to Mary that she should give birth to a Son, whom she should call Jesus, he also said, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." A man like this could be all that we have heard in the introduction, a Saviour from sins.

Jesus is a Saviour from the want and distress of sin, and we have the comforting assurance that He has come to save sinners.

Jesus is a Saviour from the debts of sin. Our debts can now be forgiven, for Jesus has taken them upon

Himself and has paid them all. By His circumcision Jesus subjected Himself to the whole law, not only the Decalogue, but to all the enactments in the Pentateuch. The pain Jesus then suffered was a beginning of all the suffering which He should endure as a punishment for sins. A sinner can therefore be delivered from his sins, however many they may be, for Jesus has paid for them all, being "the propitiation for our sins and for the whole world." A sinner can be delivered from his sins, however great they may be, yea, if they were red as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, for "the blood of Jesus, shed for you, cleanseth from all sin." Yea, in Gethsemane the burden of sin weighed Jesus down with His face to the ground, and on the cross it wrung from His heart a bitter cry; but the burden of the sins of the world, though grievously heavy, was borne by the Lamb of God, and cast away, when He arose in glory from His tomb.

Jesus is a Saviour from the threats and condemnation of the law and from the anguish thereby caused in the conscience. The Word of God threatens with anguish every soul that works evil. This anguish must be felt in the soul, either in eternity by those who shall be condemned, or in this life at the time of spiritual awakening. It was from this anguish for sins that Jesus wrought redemption, when He delivered us from the curse of the law. When Jesus permitted Himself to be circumcised, He subjected Himself to the law, as Paul the apostle expresses it, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." The threats of the law were fulfilled, when Jesus suffered the punishment for sins, and thereby He redeemed us

from the curse of the law. When a person is made free from the curse, by virtue of the redemption in Christ, he is also delivered from the anguish caused by the curse of the law. Jesus has fulfilled all the requirements of the law. If we have our share in the Saviour who has fulfilled the law, we need not fear, though condemnation is pronounced upon all who have not fulfilled the law.

Jesus is a Saviour from the power of sin. He proved victorious in His temptations, and so we need not be subject to sin. We, too, can continually be victorious, until the power of sin shall be entirely overcome in death. In His circumcision Jesus began to assume the obligations pertaining to His mediatorial office, and in His baptism He assumed them entirely. Thereupon followed His temptations. As the second Adam Jesus advanced to be tempted by the devil, and He was victorious, where the first Adam fell. Jesus stood in our stead and was victorious on our behalf. He purchased for us power unto victory over all temptations to sin. No man need be a bondservant of sin. The Son of God can make you free indeed. He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." No one need permit himself to be overcome by the devil, for Jesus has "brought him to nought," and God can "deliver us out of the power of darkness." No one need be subdued by the world, for Jesus has "overcome the world," and He can "deliver us out of this present evil world." The most deeply rooted sins must yield to the power of His grace. The most violent temptations can be resisted by a redeemed soul. The most cunning devices to lead a believer astray are frustrated

by Jesus, who protects His own, turns their simplicity into wisdom, and their earnestness into an unconquerable power unto victory.

Jesus is a Saviour even from earthly want and distress, for these are results of sin.

Physical distress follows upon sin. As soon as Adam had fallen into sin, such distress was announced. The ground was cursed. It became less fertile, necessitating hard labour and anxiety, "In toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." The Lord has not been pleased to remove all earthly difficulties. He has left hardship as a chastisement unto repentance for those who are not converted and as a trial for the believers.

Nevertheless, in as much as Jesus has wrought salvation from the punishment for sins and, hence, also from all real injury, He saves His own from much earthly distress, and many a time, in the midst of their suffering, He saves them from the worst part of all physical distress, namely, sickening worry, and enables them to heed the apostolic injunction, "In nothing be anxious." He strengthens their arms of faith so that they are enabled to "cast their anxiety upon Him." During all their tribulations, Jesus grants unto each and every one of His believers the same experience as Jacob had and of which he bore testimony, saying, "The angel which hath redeemed me from all evil."

Eventually, He saves them in a blessed death from all manner of evil. Then their tears are wiped away, never to flow any more. "Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more." "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom."

Second Part.

We are here to show how this comfort in the name of Jesus, the Saviour, can be obtained.

Circumcision was a ceremony to be performed, not only in the case of Jesus, but in the case of every one who should belong to the people of God. Every one who should have a part in the Messianic redemption should be circumcised, as Jesus the Messiah was circumcised. Concerning this circumcision Paul teaches that it does not consist in any external ceremony, but "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit." This is accompanied with a painful change, quite as keen as that caused by the "circumcision, which is outward in the flesh." So long as this change exists in the soul, it is as real a mark that the person thus transformed belongs to the spiritual Israel or the people of God, as the outward circumcision in the flesh was a mark of fellowship with the children of Israel or God's people of old.

A person obtains comfort in the name of Jesus, if he submits to the pain of the spiritual circumcision, which belongs to repentance. The infant boys in ancient Israel were adopted into the old covenant of grace without any expressed consent on their part, just as the children of the New Testament are adopted into the same covenant of grace, without any assent on their part being required. But if a person of more mature age desired to be adopted into the commonwealth of Israel, he had to submit to the pain caused by circumcision, just as Abraham himself had to, before he could become the ancestor of the woman's Seed, which had been promised, destined to bruise the serpent's head,

and in which all the nations of the earth should be blessed. A similar condition appertains to each and every one who would become a partaker of the blessing which Jesus the Saviour has purchased. One must submit to the spiritual circumcision which takes place in conversion, when the Word of God like a "two-edged sword pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow." Indeed, a man can not himself work repentance for sins and thus bring about his conversion. He must not, however, evade nor disdainfully oppose and thrust away the sword of the law, when the Holy Spirit would thereby sever the bands of sin which hold him a captive to the evil one. Nor dare he endeavor, with amusements and human comforts, to heal the wounds, which result when the Holy Spirit tries to crush his stony heart with the hammer of the law. When a person does not cease using the Word, though he perceives how it disturbs and worries his mind, the Holy Spirit leads everything to the end that the sorrow for sin shall, without causing any injury, be sufficient for God's purpose.

The Holy Spirit enables a person thus prepared by the word to receive comfort in the name of Jesus and to accept Him as a personal Saviour. This acceptance is made by faith, for John the evangelist teaches that "Jesus gave the right to become children of God to them that believe on His name." It is the character and nature of true faith to accept Jesus as a Saviour from sins which are painfully perceived. This faith begins rather as a longing, poured out in prayer, than as a certainty expressing itself in praise. Nevertheless, the certainty is there, and by virtue thereof a person

looks for comfort not yet received, and expects it confidently, with humble submission to God's pleasure, saying with the prophet Micah, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause." Even as the sinner did not, during his spiritual awakening, dare to flee from the chastising arm of the Almighty; so neither does he now venture to thrust back the hand of God which offers comfort in the name of the Saviour, promising forgiveness in His atonement and eternal life in His redemption.

With such a faith follows a continuing change in a person's spiritual condition, which becomes a constant evidence that he belongs to the people of God and that he has a part in the salvation which Jesus has purchased, and hence he also finds abiding comfort in the name of the Saviour.

In the first place, this change brings the comforting assurance that one is saved, saved from all sins, saved from the wrath of God, saved from the curse of hell, saved from the power of Satan, and that one shall be saved in the midst of all temptations, saved from want and distress, saved in death unto eternal life.

In the second place, this change in conscience also brings a change in one's mind and heart, so that one becomes like a child, without the opposition of any misinterpretations, evasions, or contradictions, laying bare one's inner life to the eyes of the omniscient God, to receive the impressions of the reminders and corrections of the Holy Spirit, to the end that He might thereby "guide me with His counsel and afterward receive me to glory."

Application.

Jesus is such a Saviour, and He grants such comfort, as has here been set forth. No doubt, you are anxious to receive the comfort, and I do not begrudge you the good fortune, for it is indeed not easy to be a sinner without a Saviour. It will not suffice, however, to entertain this comfort in your thoughts, if God has not put it into your heart, for then, perchance, you might lack it in times of adversity and, worst of all, in the time of death, when you need it the most. If you wish to avoid such a calamity, get better acquainted with Jesus, for He will teach you to know yourself as lost and to know Him as a Saviour. Call on Him, and He will answer you; seek refuge in Him, and He will receive you.

If you have learned to know how wretched, corrupted, lost, and condemned you are, then there is help for you in Jesus, for He is a Saviour for precisely such as you. He has been pleased to bear such a name as has reference to sins, from which He should save His people, in order that you might know and understand that sinners and their Saviour belong together. He has already saved you from blindness and carelessness. It is for your Saviour's sake that the Holy Spirit has opened the eyes of your understanding and quickened your slumbering conscience from the stupor of false security. Your Saviour has begun the good work in your heart and will continue it, if you abide in His Word and use it with diligence and care.

If you have already enjoyed His blessing, so that you are free from your anxiety for sin and from the fear of hell, then you verily belong to the people of

God, the spiritual Israel, the congregation of saints. Then there shall also appear in you marks of the spiritual circumcision. If Jesus has become your Saviour from the debts of sin, He has also become the Saviour from their power. If He has delivered you from your anxiety, you must also let Him deliver you from your former habits in sin, unto the glory of God. As He has begun to rule in your conscience over the fear of death, so He will also prove prevailing in your life over everything contradictory to the Word of God and enable you to escape from it. The devil may indeed lead you into error and thereby make you like a stranger before God, but unexpected tokens of mercy will soon restore the former confidence. By the experience of God's mighty help, your heart will take courage at the approach of every distress incident to this present life. Like David, meeting Goliath, you are going to be able to say, "Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like as one of them. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine." The Lord has delivered you from the lion and the bear, from the devil and from sin. The cares of life cannot be greater than one of the spiritual foes whom you have already conquered. Through Jesus you shall be able to conquer everything, for He has conquered it all.

Prayer.

Lord Jesus, Thou wast pleased to become the Saviour of Thy congregation when, by suffering and death, Thou didst establish it upon Thyself as a Rock of Salvation.

Be a Saviour unto us still, so that the gates of hell may not prevail against Thy church, whether by force or deceit. Grant us Thy grace, lest in peaceful days we may leisurely slumber, or in days of persecution yield to the enemy. Guard us against every deceitful enlightenment, and against false zeal. Be a Saviour to our King also, and save him from manifest and secret dangers. Be a Saviour to our country and help us from the ravages of war and from the domination of foreign nations. Be a Saviour to our city; protect us from misfortunes and save us from all distress, for Thy name is Jesus. Be our Jesus also and grant us Thy grace.

Amen, Lord Jesus, Amen.

Second Prayer Sunday, 1799

Introduction.

*Up, get you out of this place;
For the Lord will destroy the city.*

It was with fear and amazement that Lot brought this message and warning to his sons-in-law. We read the narrative in Gen. 19. 1-14.

It is not my purpose to appear as a prophet predicting destruction on this place, but the whole condition of an unconverted man is like that of a city or a place where he rests in security, but whence he must depart. Therefore, O sinner, cast your sins away, lest for their sake you be cast away from God's presence. Forsake sin, lest you be eternally forsaken by God. Up, get you out of this place! Sin belongs to hell. It comes from there and it tends thither. Every one who clings to his sins in life and to whom sins adhere in death must follow them whither they tend, to the abode of the devil, who is the author of sin. If you are his subject, you must at last abide with your master. Up, get you out of this place! Nor imagine that this is an easy matter. The departure out of Sodom, though only an earthly journey, demanded some preparation, for which a certain brief time was allowed. Your whole life is granted for such a purpose. Use it well and prepare yourself

for the great final journey. Think not that grace is obtained with a mere sigh, nor imagine that you shall be converted by uttering a few words. Do not venture to the brink of eternity, for you may soon be precipitated into its bottomless depths. Let not the devil edge you along to the slippery ice of sickness, for the storms of despair may bring you out on the boundless regions of eternity, where you may not be able to stop in your flight. Beware, lest perchance, after repeated delays and postponements in the matter of your soul's salvation, the day when you would repent find you in the depths of eternal perdition. Up, get you out of this place!

TEXTS.

The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Rom. 13. 12.

Therefore I now bow the knees of my heart and ask Thee, O Lord, for pardon. Alas, O Lord, I have sinned, I have sinned, and I know my transgressions. Manasseh, v. 11.

Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and that say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Is. 29. 15.

Proposition.

THE GRACE OF GOD AS A REFUGE FOR AN AWAKENED SINNER.

1. Whence a sinner must flee to find refuge with God. Rom. 13. 12.
2. Whither an awakened sinner must flee. Manasseh 11.
3. What he must aspire to, if he shall retain his refuge with God and His grace. Is. 29. 15.

First Part.

It is not necessary to remind an intelligent audience that the apostle does not here mean a natural night and day; but it may be in place to say, for the enlightenment of the simple-hearted, that the apostle speaks of the night of ignorance, blindness, and carelessness in the matters pertaining to eternity, a night which covered the whole earth before the time of Christ and His apostles. It was the night of paganism. The condition then prevailing in the world was like that of a natural night. A light may be lit in a room, and there one can see, but outside in space one cannot see anything, for darkness prevails out there. The small country inhabited by Israel was in comparison with the rest of the world like a small cottage on a vast plain. Here a light was burning, for Israel was "intrusted with the oracles of God." Elsewhere there prevailed the darkness of idolatry. Here and there among the Jews appeared a true Israelite with concern for another Canaan than that in which he lived. But elsewhere throughout the world, a brutish carelessness expressed itself in this fashion, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we must die." In Israel some were awake, but in the heathen world sleep was everywhere prevalent.

With the advent of day that vast field became quite as well lit up as the little room where the candle previously burned. When Jesus came and sent His apostles to preach the gospel of the kingdom and the way thither, the heathens learnt to know the way quite as well as the Jews. They needed not, like the Ethiopian eunuch, to make extensive journeys to the land of Israel for enlightenment, for the light was brought to them and set

upon its own candlestick. Night was far spent and day was at hand. Indeed, the heathens showed a rather greater earnestness and concernment for the salvation of their souls than the people of Israel itself.

What has here been said concerning the heathen world can also be said concerning every man who is indifferent with reference to his soul. There is night, and at night one can not see, even though he has perfect eyes, for darkness prevents their right use. If a traveler then asks his companion, if they are in the right way, the latter must admit that he does not know with certainty. A similar admission would be made by spiritually blind sinners, if they spoke sincerely. They may trouble themselves greatly to convince others of their assurance that they are the children of God; but this very troublesome effort shows that they are laboring against a secret voice which dictates the opposite. Their eagerness to defend themselves and to give reason for their pretended hope shows that the hope is not very secure, but that they have reason to fear that some one may rob them of it. Indeed, my friend, assurance of salvation comes not thus lightly into the heart. It comes from God, and if it is obtained, it is not easily removed. No man can give it, nor can any man take it away. Indifferent sinners can not with certainty know where they are, nor where they are to abide; for in their hearts there is night. They are asleep and lie as unconcerned as those who are asleep, quite unafraid, quite unable to save themselves, even from the most obvious danger.

It is from such slumber that a sinner must be awakened, but it cannot be done until God quickens him. The sinner is even more unable than one physically

sleeping to awake himself. Jesus is like a good friend, who notices that fire has broken out in the house of his friend, while all there are asleep. He hastens thither and raps at the door. He calls to the people to awake and save themselves. Thus Jesus represents Himself in Rev. 3. 20. It now happens as when one naturally sleeping awakes. While half awake he hears the rapping and the cry. Finally he awakes, opens his eyes, sees his danger, leaps up, and endeavors to save himself. In like manner an awakening sinner perceives something unusual when hearing the Word of God, becomes sorrowful and affrighted, convinced of his spiritual danger, and impelled to seek after salvation. When a soul is thus awakened and is endeavoring to flee from the wrath of God, it is necessary that the following instruction be given to him in order that he may know what it is that he must flee from, if he is to find refuge in the grace of God.

This instruction is given by the apostle in analogy with the departure of night and the advent of day, "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." The works of darkness are intentional sins. Such sins are called "works of darkness," for they are preferably done in darkness. The sinner is bent on sinning, though he may be ashamed of the abominable appearance of his sin, and so he sins in secret. He chooses the darkness of the night or, at any rate, wishes to have his sins quite as forgotten as if they were covered with the darkness of night. Intentional sins are also called "works of darkness," because it is the Prince of Darkness who tempts man to sin, fortifies him in sin, and induces him to re-

main in sin. Hence, such sins are also, in John's first epistle, called the works of the devil, "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." An intentional sinner sins, not by reason of ignorance or imprudence, but, even as the devil, with malicious deliberation. Intentional sins are also called "the works of the flesh." It is from all such sins that an awakened sinner must flee. It is such sins that he must "cast off."

You tell me that you cannot understand this. "I have often debated with myself," you say, "how I might bring about such a change in my life, but, in the midst of such self-deliberation, I have finally stopped in the same mind as before." I reply, do you not know whence this comes? You have the one hand full of sin and the other full of the world; you should cast them away with both hands, but, before you do this, you look at the one and behold the other, and you thus become loath to part with these friends of yours. You are doing like Eve, looking at the forbidden fruit and becoming infatuated with it. While thus deliberating with yourself, you become reversed in mind. Instead of casting away sin and the world, you clasp them to your heart. No, you must act rapidly; if you are to cast them away, it will not do to shove them away slowly; you must *cast off* the works of darkness, or, as Jesus expresses it, *cut off* the aggravating foot or hand, pluck out the enticing eye.

Someone again remarks, "I have tried to cast them off, but I have not been able to do it. I have determined never to do thus and thus again, but still I have sinned again. Angered with myself, I have resolutely

promised that it should never happen again, but I have nevertheless again fallen into sin." I reply, Of course, you have fallen. You have tried to cast off the works of darkness, but you have not put on the armour of light. This must follow in life, as it follows in the words of the apostle. The devil will not easily let go of his captive. You cannot unarmed escape from his superior power. When he notices that you are becoming concerned about your salvation, he acts like a spider when a fly tries to get loose from his web. As the spider winds new cords about the wretched little fly, so the devil arranges new entertainments or devices to hold captive, even more securely, the soul that has begun to seek for rescue. So then, you need weapons, as the apostle has said, weapons of light against the Prince of Darkness. Of course, we are not here speaking of natural light. "The armour of light" signifies the Word of God, which in the Scriptures is called a light and also a weapon.

"Yes," you now rejoin, "but I have the Word of God, and I read it now and then, and still no change has taken place in me." I reply, This is due to the fact that, as you say, you use the Word "now and then." If a warrior were thus to leave his weapons hanging on the wall, his enemies might well surprise him and slay him, before he could get his musket and defend himself. He must in time of war carry his weapons with him; they must be, as it were, a part of his dress and be ever at hand for ready use. This is Paul's teaching when he says, "Put on the armour of light." If you leave your Bible lying on the shelf, the tempter may overtake you before you can look up your Bible and

find out what to do in your present exigency. You must see to it that the Word of God is as near to you as your very clothing, that it may enter into your mind with knowledge and into your heart with desire. You must see to it that the Word of God be planted into your life, and that you may be clothed with this weapon of light. Then you will be enabled to flee from the former manner of sinful life and to cast off the works of darkness.

Second Part.

We here ask whither an awakened sinner shall flee, and I reply, He must flee to the grace of God. We first note what it is that impels him to take refuge in the grace of God. It is a thorough knowledge of sin and its wretchedness. Manasseh, whose words constitute our second text, was a king of Judah. He had been very much infatuated with the errors of idolatry and had committed many sins. He had even been cruel to those who were not like-minded with him. God chastised and punished him with defeat at the hands of a foreign king. In his captivity Manasseh began to think, and it was probably now that he offered the prayer of which our text is a part. He describes his state of mind, saying, "I know my transgressions." Behold, O sinner! When a man arrives at true knowledge of his sins, he does not consider them merely as shortcomings and faults, but as awful transgressions. Then you realize that you have transgressed all the commandments of God, and that even the sins which are deemed negligible by the world are abominable before God. In this way you learn to understand that you have sinned against all the commandments, but that

the source of your unhappiness lies even deeper, not in your manner of living, but in your heart, not in your acts, but in your person. Manasseh expresses this by repeating his confession, pointing out his own person. "I have sinned, I have sinned." Thus you discover the sinful depravity of your heart, O sinner, and get a clear conception of your corrupted nature. There is the root which bears the fruit of evil. There is the well-spring of corruption. When you realize this, you look in vain for refuge. Anguish and weeping then prove inefficient to blot out such an immense indebtedness, and you find it utterly impossible to expect any real improvement by the mere exertions of a depraved soul. There is no other refuge left for you than the grace of God, and you look in vain for another. Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ! He has opened "a new and living way." With the suffering in His flesh, He wrought atonement for the wrath of God, and opened a way to the grace of God. By means of what He did while walking here in the garb of human flesh and blood, Jesus purchased an eternal righteousness, which suffices throughout all time even for you.

This refuge in the grace of God is taken with prayer. "Therefore I bow the knees of my heart and ask Thee, O Lord, for pardon." This is not a thoughtless and careless repetition of a few prayers, for when Manasseh speaks of bowing the knees of his heart, he means what Jesus expresses by saying that we should "pray in spirit and in truth." An awakened sinner asks for the grace which Jesus purchased with His atonement and righteousness. He has no other plea to offer than the merits of Jesus, no other basis for his hope to be heard than

God's promise to grant this grace to everyone who desires to accept it for nothing, as the grace of Jesus Christ, for His sake and on His account.

An awakened sinner comes with a sincere confession of his sins and seeks refuge in the grace of God. Manasseh said, "Alas, O Lord, I have sinned." Such a confession is not needed for the Lord's sake. He knows, far better than you do, your sinful ways; it is He who has shown them to you. The confession is needed for your own sake, that you may the better learn to know how loathsome your sins are, and that your heart may be opened before God to make your confession with sincerity and confidence. When David thus sought refuge in the grace of God, he tells us that he approached the mercy seat and found what he sought, for God found room in the heart thus opened, and His Spirit was enabled to grant a true faith, bringing with it the forgiveness of sins.

Third Part.

When an awakened sinner has found refuge in the grace of God, it nevertheless becomes necessary for him to flee from everything which would deprive him of the grace he has found. I shall therefore now proceed to show that an awakened sinner must flee from sin, after he has found refuge in the grace of God.

A person just converted meets his greatest dangers among his former associates, and therefore he must leave them and especially flee from those who do not have any regard for the grace of God. Their mockery might soon make the new convert ashamed of Jesus and His Word and thus make him again unworthy of the grace which he has just received. Their threats might

make him afraid and lead him like Peter to deny his Lord. Their persuasive speech might deceive an easily perverted heart to follow them back to the former ways. Their examples might quicken passions so recently subdued and again bring the saved soul into the thralldom of sin. Their conversation might suffocate the feeble spirit and gradually extinguish its flame. Therefore it is entirely necessary for a new convert to flee from the evil associations of those who are not converted nor wish to be. The Scriptures also counsel and admonish us to avoid such companionship, saying, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners." This was God's intent when He forbade the Jews' yoking together a horse and an ox, not that the yoking together of animals of different species was wrong in itself, but it had a deep significance, namely that which Paul expresses when he says, "Be not unequally yoked with the unbelievers." It is quite sufficient that we cannot entirely avoid their company, since we cannot escape from this world. It is enough that we are constrained to deal with them in matters pertaining to this present life. It is enough that our Christian sense of duty now and then demands that we must endure those who are evil, and that our common charity occasionally makes such associations necessary. We should all the more take care to avoid unnecessary associations and undue intimacy with those of a carnal and worldly mind.

"But," you say, "how shall I be able to know who they are, in order that I may beware of them?" I reply, This is precisely what I propose to show in the light of our text. It mentions three characteristics of those

from whom a person must flee after he has taken refuge in the grace of God. "Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah" etc.

First, they seek to hide their counsel. When you meet a person who shows a wrong purpose but immediately, when caught, turns about, saying, "Oh, no, that was not my intention. I did not mean to say that, but this is what I meant"; when you find people who do not shoot whither they aim, then you must beware lest you be entangled, like Eve, by the craftiness of the serpent.

Secondly, there are those who are somewhat more simple-minded. "Whose works are in the dark." This is another characteristic of those from whom a converted person must flee. Converted people are like the Roman of old who built his house with windows on all sides, so that everybody could see what he was about. Jesus characterizes a converted man when He says, "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God." A converted person might indeed permit another converted person to see everything he does, yes even open his heart to be read like a book. "But every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprovèd." If you notice someone who is very much inclined to deny what he does and to obliterate the marks of his footsteps along the ways that he has walked, continually anxious that no one shall know what he is about, such an one is certainly a child of deception. He assuredly has something which he needs to conceal since he thus hides himself.

With this extreme cunning, with all these devices, the children of this world imagine that much is being accomplished, to the extent that it has become a maxim with them, that they say, "Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" This is a third characteristic of the unconverted. They will not listen to the idea that any one might be able to understand their inner condition. They become intolerant, if any one intimates that he has the slightest conception of this. They immediately protest against judgments and condemnations, and it is a real doctrine in the system of the unconverted that, in as much as one cannot search a man's heart, no one can make conclusions with reference to the condition of another's soul. When you find people who lose their peace as soon as a spiritual conversation is directed their way, you may indeed flee, and be glad, if you can make your escape and save yourself, without stopping to deliberate how you might do something for their persuasion.

Application.

Let me now, in conclusion, admonish you with the words recorded in Eph. 5. 14. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." If you hear the word of the Lord more clearly now than otherwise, then awake and arise, lest you awake with the rich man in the flames of hell. If you awake and are enabled to realize the danger of your soul, beware, lest you merely awake and remain lying there; awake rightly and sin not, awake and flee from your former sinful life, and see that you cast away the works of darkness, to the end that Christ may enlighten you.

By walking in the light of grace you shall be enlightened. If you diligently seek for refuge, you shall find it in the grace which your Saviour has procured. If you are laden with sins, if you are laboring against the assaults of temptations, then your Saviour offers you a refuge, saying "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And after you have found this refuge, He assures you that you shall not be excluded therefrom, for whosoever comes to Him shall in no wise be cast out. Amen.

First Sunday After Epiphany.

Introduction.

These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.

Thus the apostle John speaks of faith to them that believe. 1 John 5. 13.

It is remarkable that God has been pleased to select faith as the way by means of which a man shall receive his share in redemption. God has not chosen any work, deed, or enterprise of man for this purpose; He has reserved that honor for Himself. God has not provided that the fear of His wrath shall determine any man's salvation, for He does not wish to force any one. Neither has He ordained that thankfulness and love shall be determining factors, for love presupposes confidence, but rather this very confidence in His mercy, shown in the suffering and death of the Son of God, and reliance on the atonement by means of which His mercy has become available and efficient.

It is this faith by means of which a man obtains the forgiveness of sins and becomes justified and saved. The apostle calls it to believe on the name of the Son of God, or to trust in God by virtue of what Jesus has wrought. Indeed, it is only by virtue of this that a man

can trust in the God whom he has offended. The salvation contained in the name of the Saviour is by God declared sufficient, but though a person might understand this and become mightily convinced of it, still no real confidence in God arises, unless God Himself, by means of the supernatural power of His Word, which is not dependent on the meditations of human reason, freely puts into man's heart to believe.

Faith is essential. Its development was the object of the words of God which the apostle wrote, and a result thereof, according to our introductory text. He had written that his friends might believe on the name of the Son of God, and he expected this very result of the word which he had written.

The apostle describes the growth or different measures of faith as having three degrees. First, to believe on the name of the Son of God, as has just been shown, and to trust in the mercy of God in Christ. Secondly, to know that one has eternal life, or to believe that one believes, and to be sure of one's inheritance of eternal life. Thirdly, the apostle again speaks of believing on the name of the Son of God,* thereby conveying something else than that in the first clause, a special degree of faith, to be attained by the converted, after he has gained assurance of his salvation. It is a lesser degree of faith to believe so long as one has assurance of eternal life, and it is a greater degree of faith when a regenerated person retains his trust in the mercy of God in Christ, even though he lacks such assurance of eternal salvation.

* See the Authorized Version, which agrees with the old Swedish version here referred to.

Proposition.

THE MEASURE OF FAITH GRANTED BY GOD, AS A CRITERION OF ONE'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION

- I. The measure of faith granted by God.
- II. How a person must thereby judge of his spiritual condition.

First Part.

The Measure of Faith Granted by God.

The first and least measure of faith embraces the whole Christ and appropriates all His merits, bringing with it complete justification, which cannot be increased, and an entire renewal of the heart. Just as a spark is as real fire as a large flame, so the first spark of hope in Christ, arising in a contrite heart, is as real faith as the most confident reliance on the victorious Lord and Saviour. Though ever so weak, a true faith embraces Jesus, "who was made unto us *wisdom from God,*" and it expects to learn of Him to know His word and ways of life. It accepts Him "*unto righteousness,*" expecting forgiveness, not by virtue of any contrition or repentance of its own, but by virtue of the suffering and obedience of Jesus. It accepts Him "*unto sanctification,*" expecting to receive from Him a changed heart and strength to follow Him in newness of life. It also accepts Him "*unto redemption,*" hoping by Him to be delivered from the misfortunes of life and to be saved from the torments of hell.

Whereas even the first feeble faith fully embraces Christ, it brings with it complete justification, so that

such a believer is considered quite as justified before God as the greatest heroes of faith, and, indeed, quite as pure from sin as "the spirits of just men made perfect," for he is considered quite as righteous as his Saviour. The merits of Jesus, by which the believer has been justified, cannot be increased, nor enlarged by any growth of our faith; so neither can the justification of a true believer be increased. It is quite as complete with the first beginning of faith as it can ever become.

The first measure of faith is that when a person begins to inquire about faith, though he cannot then perceive that it is faith at all. The beginning takes place when a person who has been frightened by the law begins to ask for salvation in Jesus Christ. Though the unclothed and wounded Redeemer is altogether too insignificant for a proud reason, He nevertheless is the first fountain of comfort to a grieved soul. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, such a person begins to search in the Scriptures for the things concerning the Saviour. He then finds that it is by faith alone that one enters into fellowship with the Saviour, for he finds that God's promises everywhere have no other qualifications than this, "Unto every one that believeth." This inquiry about faith implies a vital concernment and an earnest seeking, which find expression in prayer that the Lord might grant a true faith. Every desire of such a soul is, "Alas, if I could only believe!" When he hears the Word, he listens carefully to hear if the preacher has anything to say about faith, and when he reads the Word of God, it is as though his heart addressed the authors of the Scriptures in this wise, "Ye dear apostles of the Lord, ye beloved prophets, teach me to know my

Saviour. Alas! bring me to Him. Show me how I shall acquire a true faith in Him." That this already is true faith is evident from the word of promise in Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth;* and I will pardon it." God promises pardoning grace to every one that "seeketh truth." An honest seeking after faith must be faith, for "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God." It is quite as impossible that one who is well-pleasing unto God should be without faith as it is impossible to be well-pleasing to God without faith. The mystery of faith is hidden from the reason of the natural man. No one concerned about his salvation inquires about faith, until there is faith in his heart, for the concern of an awakened sinner is fixed on the hardship and wretchedness of sin, to the extent that there is no room for such inquiry, unless God Himself directs him to seek this only means of attaining righteousness and eternal salvation. And why is an awakened soul so deeply concerned about obtaining faith? He longs for a part in the merits of His Saviour. He is concerned about entering into fellowship with Jesus. He yearns for true righteousness. But what is such concern, such longing, if not faith? Jesus Himself pronounces such a person blessed, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." It is then certain that he is on the way, coming to Jesus. It is also evident that he has come to Jesus, for Jesus Himself is the way. Yes, a person who is on the way coming to Jesus, has

* "Seeketh faith," according to the author's version.

already come to Him, for Jesus has assured such a soul that he shall in no wise be cast out. But there can be no question of any casting out, except from a room where one already is and has his dwelling.

We find another measure of faith, where a person has grown in enlightenment to perceive that he has faith, to which belongs a deep sense of joy, though this is not the real measure of his faith. When a person diligently beholds Christ in the Scriptures, he begins to reflect "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," and he is thus enlightened to know himself as well as Jesus. When one enters aright into the Word, one finds shooting forth from all of God's promises beams of light, which, as it were, find their focal point in one's heart, so that one is enabled to see clearly how the Word in its entirety acquits one of guilt. Thus enlightened, one finds that his faith is such as the Word of God describes and that he has become converted in the manner prescribed by the Word of God.

Upon such enlightenment follows deep joy, for how should a person become aware that he is covered with the robe of righteousness, and yet not rejoice in his Saviour? How should he be able to find that he has been clothed with the garments of salvation, without being joyful in God? Spiritual gladness follows the assurance of grace, as the shadow follows the body, but we must not imagine that the shadow is the body itself. When the sun shines or a candle has been lit, the shadow appears, but in darkness and gloom it does not appear. It would be foolish to doubt the existence of the body, merely because one cannot see its shadow, for when the sun begins to shine, the shadow immediately appears.

As long as the Sun of Righteousness appears to them that fear the name of the Lord, He brings the perception of "healing in His wings," but when He appears to set and shine no more, even they that fear the Lord may walk in darkness, without joy or any clearly discernible peace. We must not then conclude that faith has been lost, merely because we do not experience the joy of faith. After the storm has passed, God again lets the sun of grace shine, and then

"Light is sown for the righteous
And gladness for the upright in heart."

A greater measure of faith is this, that a person is able to believe in spite of everything his heart feels or his reason sees. The beginning of such faith takes place when the Holy Spirit trains and teaches a person to believe without any heartfelt emotions. On the one hand, God removes the emotions before a person has time to rely on them, and, on the other hand, He leads the soul to the gospel and to a hearty reliance on the promises of grace. In this way a person becomes trained in faith and enabled to believe the Scriptures, even though he finds no corresponding feelings in his heart. By such means he eventually obtains so great a stability of faith that he is able to believe the Word, although he finds the opposite in his heart; that he is sure of the promises in the Word, although his heart speaks to the contrary; and that he has perfect assurance of forgiveness, grace, and salvation through Jesus Christ, although in his heart he finds condemnation, wrath, and un blessedness. If our heart condemns us, we still know that we are of the truth, and are able to assure our heart before

Him with the confidence that "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." By this training in faith a man attains such an increase of faith that he can believe quite the contrary of that which his reason sees; that he is able to believe that God will provide for his temporal wants, though there be no visible means for his support; that he may feel sure of help, though he sees before him only want and distress, and expect great good-will of men, being enabled to live with them in peace, while it appears as though he were hated by all.

Second Part.

*How a Person Must Judge of His Spiritual Condition
by the Measure of Faith Granted by God.*

The apostle says in our epistle text, "Let no one think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but rather soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith."

If you have not now, nor ever had, the first measure of faith, you cannot have attained to any of the other measures. You then have full reason to consider yourself unconverted, not having any faith at all. An unconverted man is very strangely minded. Occasionally he speaks of his faith as though it were very weak, and then, again, as though he had arrived at the highest measure of certainty and courage. In spite of all this, let it be remembered that you have not as yet prayerfully and diligently searched the Scriptures and inquired for faith. Nor is this strange, for you have never been seeking for Jesus, nor realized that you are without Him. If you really felt, as you say, that your faith is weak, you would be grieved, and again if, as you

sometimes pretend, you had a strong faith in the Lord, you would have experienced the lack of both faith and grace. But when you say that you have always had a good faith, it immediately becomes apparent that your faith cannot be of the right kind, for you have not grown to such stability of faith in the manner that other children of God do. Furthermore, when your faith is compared with your manner of life, it becomes evident that your faith is a monstrosity. When one organ of a newborn babe is as large as it should be in an adult, while other members of the body are like those of a normal child, this child is deformed. So, too, when faith, which is the chief part of a newborn convert, at once is as large as that of the fathers in grace, while other characteristics and gifts of grace are as small as those of the weakest beginner in Christian life, then this "new man" is without due proportion, a monstrosity. When your knowledge is so slight that you need to learn "the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God"; when the light that is in you is so faint that there scarcely is twilight or dawn of enlightenment; when love is so lukewarm as to give place to carnal jealousy and strife; when conditions are such, and you nevertheless boast of a good and strong faith in the Lord, then your whole religion is a monstrosity, and your faith is deformed. It is not a work of the Holy Spirit. Satan has given it to you, or you have taken it yourself. It is not the work of God, nor a true faith — the faith that embraces Christ. It is not the faith that appropriates the forgiveness of sins. It is not the faith by which Jesus dwells in the heart. It is not the faith that brings with it the Holy Spirit. It is not the faith

the possession of which in time is followed by unspeakable blessedness in eternity. No, it is a false, imaginary faith. With this faith you have no part in Jesus; you are far from Him. If you get no other faith than this, you will never get rid of your sins. If you keep this faith to the end, this very faith will become the cord, the chain, by which the evil spirit will bring you into eternal destruction.

If, on the other hand, you notice in you some of the things pertaining to the first measure of faith, then you may consider yourself on the way to Jesus, and if you have received the comforting insight into the Word that you have come to Him, you must not cast it away. When you realize that you have received the first measure of faith, God thereby grants you the greater measure, namely the assurance and certainty of a true faith. When a person has been truly converted by the Holy Spirit, he will also be brought forward on the way of life. Though you have unconsciously come to faith in Jesus, God will enlighten you to know that you have the true faith. The Spirit of God will thereby strengthen your soul against approaching temptations and confirm your resolution to belong to Jesus forever. If you have not resisted the beginnings of God's work of grace, you must not resist the perfecting thereof. If, by the Word of God, you find that you have the first measure of faith, a sincere longing for faith, an inquiry about faith, and a seeking after faith, then this very insight is an enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, quite as much so as that of your awakening, when you saw that you had no faith. This light cannot deceive you nor lead you astray. Hence, if in this way you become kindly

persuaded and comfortingly convinced that you have the true faith, God grants you the second, greater measure of faith by assuring you that you have the first measure. "Cast not away your boldness," for you shall in this way receive an increased measure of faith, just as surely as faith has been begun in you.

If you have the assurance of a true faith, you must not become proud, imagining that you have come to the greatest measure of faith, nor demand that you shall always have this assurance and become impatient when you lack it, for you ought to know that it is God's purpose to thus bring you to a greater measure of faith, enabling you to believe without feelings and in spite of feelings. If you have found that your faith is real and true, then you may thank and praise the Lord for this gracious refreshing. Let your heart be strengthened thereby, but be not puffed up. You have indeed received an increased faith, but not the greatest measure. Jesus blesses those who "have not seen, and yet have believed." It is to guard you from pride and to train you in faith that the Lord soon deprives you of that assurance. Remember that God's ways are such with His faithful ones, and be content therewith. Do not rush wilfully along, endeavoring to regain the certainty of mind, for you cannot find it in the recesses of your heart. Go rather to the Word of God and look for insight into its promises, and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you to rely on these. Behold, you have a greater faith, when you are able to believe without consulting the feelings of your heart; for God is greater than your heart. Your faith thus gains stability and certainty, for the words of promise are irrevocable and unailing,

while your feelings are changeable and unreliable. You thus eventually obtain a durable peace, and you are being prepared for the future beholding of God's face in heaven, while God frequently hides His face from you during your earthly pilgrimage.

Finally, you must also take warning and remember that it is quite as possible to recede as to advance in the measure of faith. By neglecting the means of grace and growing sluggish in prayer and careless in his manner of life, it may happen that one who had attained the stability of the fathers can be set back to the weakness of spiritual children, so that, while before he could believe in spite of the condemnations of his heart, he now finds it increasingly difficult to feel at ease without the conscious enjoyment of the sweetness of grace. It may likewise happen that one who had attained certainty, can, by the neglect of grace, fall into protracted wavering and lose the assurance of his state in grace, to the extent that there remains only a seeking after grace, like that at the first awakening. A person in this state considers himself without any part in Jesus, just as he did at his first awakening, but he is still remaining in the state of grace, though near falling away from it.

In conclusion, let me instruct the upright in heart that the great measure of faith cannot always be perceived, but only now and then, between the spiritual battles. When the devil cannot prevent your growth in faith, he tries to deprive you of the joy which you should have when you become aware of your spiritual growth. The Lord permits this. The evil one is allowed to cover you with darkness and to obscure from

your vision the measure of faith attained; for it is one of the great wonders along the way that a lack of assurance increases faith, and that faith becomes greater by seeming less. If you find yourself unexpectedly set back in your faith, without any previous neglect on your part of the Word and of prayer, this is no evidence of a diminishing faith, but rather of a new spiritual battle, which thus almost imperceptibly begins. You have the less reason to fear that you have erred from the faith, if you notice that your conception of the Redeemer is retained, working on your mind, sustaining your hope, and urging you to obedience. This is an evidence that you are grasped by your Redeemer. Be content with this very slight measure of faith. The Lord who has helped you to the lesser faith will also help you to the greater. Only continue to press on, that you may apprehend that which you have not yet apprehended, and you shall not forever miss the goal, though you have not yet attained it, but you shall reach the goal which God has set before you and to which you are aspiring, since you are able to say with Paul, "I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." Amen.

Septuagesima.

(Outline).

Behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. Luke 13. 30.

The Lord Jesus says that there will be a peculiar interchange of places in His glorious kingdom, quite different from that which might reasonably be expected.

A. Some who have been known as being outside of the kingdom of God's grace will, contrary to the expectations of many, be found to be within that glorious kingdom.

No one who at the time of his death stands outside of the kingdom of grace will ever be found within the kingdom of glory.

But some who have lived in such a way that all who have had knowledge in the Word of God might know that they were not true Christians become such, though the world which saw their former condition may not have observed the latter.

B. Some who were expected to be seen in the kingdom of glory will not be seen there.

Fear not, O sorrowful heart! No one who, by reason of the Word of God, can be expected in the kingdom of glory, shall be wanting there.

But some who have been called by grace and have

apparently attained to faith have nevertheless remained in their natural condition; and some who have had the true faith have fallen away. These shall be missed in heaven, though it appeared as if they would surely come there.

C. Many who have been expected to receive an exceptionally great degree of glory shall be found to be but barely saved.

Those who have had great gifts, who have been sanctified by grace, and who have thus been brilliant, but nevertheless in personal character fundamentally weak — these belong here.

Those who have had exalted positions and who, by virtue of this, have shown enlightenment and power, but who have in themselves been weak — these may also belong here.

D. Some who have been considered humble and of low degree shall there be first, indeed, some who have had slight gifts and who have had external faults so that they scarcely seemed to be Christians.

The Text.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run, that ye may attain. 1 Cor. 9. 24—10. 5.

In Greece, and especially in the city of Corinth to which the apostle wrote this letter, there were among other physical exercises also those of races on specially made race-tracks. A large number of young people, even from far distant countries, came to take part in the games. After due training, to which belonged temperance in all things, they all exerted themselves to the

utmost to reach the goal first and thus to receive the prize.

The apostle here finds an analogy to the racing for the kingdom of God. He imagines how the athletes rushed on, and he urges the Christian racers to all the more eagerness, inasmuch as they are racing for a crown of greater glory. We can well understand how it frequently happened that some who were last at the beginning of the race gathered strength and advanced to be among the first, and vice versa.

Proposition.

A GREAT INTERCHANGE OF PLACES ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN

- I. The last become first.
- II. The first become last.

First Part.

The Last Become First.

The last are also on the way, though they are last at the very first beginning of the race. They have a heartfelt desire to hear and read the Word of God, and they are often moved thereby, though nothing more. They have not yet been enlightened by the Word to see their depravity, nor have they been moved by its power to seek after salvation.

A. Some remain last. There are last which shall be first, says the Saviour, and this implies that not all who are last shall be first, but only a few. "Awake up righteously, and sin not; for some have no knowledge of God." Some Corinthians were awakened, but

not rightly awake, persons who knew not God, but remained lying in their sins.

There are some who gladly hear and read the Word, and are moved to tears, but nothing more. Some can remain in this condition for many years. They are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." They are being driven by their learning in the Scriptures and appear to be in the race, but they get nowhere; they ever remain last.

B. Some attain a righteous life in Christ, though they do not become first. They were for some time, perhaps a long while, among the last, but they permitted the Holy Spirit to quicken them to earnestness, and thus eventually attained a righteous life, though they have not made great progress. They are like those of whom we read in Rev. 3. 8, "Thou hast little power." Those who were ignorant have at last learned the rudiments which are necessary for salvation, "the first principles of the oracles of God." These become saved, but scarcely so.

C. Some become first, though they were last. They were last, but they gathered new strength and began to rush eagerly along, passing by all their competitors. They were ignorant, but finally, like David, they became more learned than their teachers. Like the Syro-Phenician woman, they advanced so far from their heathen unbelief that they received the testimony which she received of the Lord Jesus, "Thy faith is great". Instead of merely longing for feelings and relying on them, they have attained a faith like that of Thomas, to not see, and yet believe.

Such were the Thessalonians. Their faith grew ex-

ceedingly, and their love to each other abounded. Their patience had become perfected to the extent that, like Moses, they considered "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," and they had gained such stability in their hope that, like Paul, they were sure that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Second Part.

The First Who Shall Be Last.

What do we mean with the first? We mean those who have just been described, who have attained the greatest measure and the highest degree of the love of Christ.

A. Some are first and remain first. They keep the faith unto the end. Jesus can say to them as He did to His apostles, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." Other Christians can also give them the same testimony, as, for instance, Peter* gives his fellow Christians (Acts 1. 21). These keep the faith and a good conscience. They remain "steadfast and unmovable always." The apostle John calls them "fathers" and says concerning them that they "knew him which is from the beginning." They have thus "attained unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," they are experienced in mind, and they walk stedfastly with their feet.

B. Some come near being last, but do not become last. This was the case with the pastor in Ephesus,

* The author says, "Luke, Acts 1. 21."

Rev. 2. 1-5, also with Peter in Antioch, and with the Corinthians and the Galatians.

The pastor in Ephesus had left his first love, but he nevertheless still had faith, and he labored for the sake of Jesus. The apostle Peter came near being one of the last in Antioch, where he fell into hypocrisy, eating with the Gentiles while alone with them, but withdrawing from them when other Jews arrived. But he gathered new power when reprimanded by Paul. The Corinthians had fallen back to the extent that there were factions and quarrels among them, and that they even condoned a manifest work of the devil in their midst. But they accepted the reproof in Paul's first letter to them and repented, so that in his second letter he was enabled to express satisfaction with the results of the reproof.

C. Some who have been first become last, but do not remain such; they revive anew.

Peter had been one of the first. Jesus had borne testimony that Peter had a knowledge of Christ, not attainable by flesh and blood, but the result of a revelation given him by the heavenly Father Himself. He became one of the last when he cursed and swore and denied that he knew Jesus. But he was awakened when the cock crew, he was convicted by the look of Jesus and became converted. He again advanced in the love of Jesus and could appeal to the omniscience of his Master, asserting that he loved Him.

The Galatians had been among the foremost. Jesus had been set before their eyes as crucified. They had become last when they had fallen from grace and endeavored to become justified by the law. But they re-

vived when Paul was "again in travail until Christ was formed in them." He hoped that they would become steadfast in Christ, and he had the assurance that the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit were still to be found among them. He had the confidence that there were still spiritually minded people among them who could restore those that had fallen in sin.

D. Some who have been first become last, and remain thus.

This was the case with a large number of Jesus' own disciples who had been with Him a long time. Many went back when Jesus had spoken to them about the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and we have no record that they ever returned to Him. Judas Iscariot had been one of the first of the apostles who rejoiced to find that the devils were subject to them in the name of Jesus; but he became one of the last. He sold his Lord, and he departed into the outer darkness, in despair having taken his own life. Demas had been one of Paul's disciples, but he left his master, "having loved this present world," and we nowhere read that he again began to long for the kingdom of God. In Hebrews* 6. 4-6, we read of others who had been first. They had "once been enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost, and tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come." Then we are told how they became last, how they "fell away, crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame." Indeed, we are told that

* The author here and elsewhere attributes this epistle to Paul.

these remain last, for "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance."

Application.

If you imagine that you are one of the first, or at least nearly so, then you are certainly one of the last, and in danger of drifting away from the way of life. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

If you admit that you are one of the last and desire to remain so, not wishing to advance, then you are not even on the way of salvation. Though you imagine that this is spiritual poverty and humility, it is nothing but hypocrisy whereby you attempt to cover your laziness and indifference. You desire to stand, as it were, on the boundary between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. You wish to have a little of each and to serve God and Mammon. You wish to have the grace of God and the friendship of the world, to find pleasure in the Word of God and to enjoy yourself in the Vanity Fair. But beware, lest Satan lay hold on you and pull you back into his dominion. Yea, look and see, if you are not already there. I know how you would like to have it. You would like to be in the world, and you feel quite satisfied, if you but enter the door of heaven, but let me tell you the truth: if you are thus satisfied and not striving to advance, you shall not even enter through the door. No, you will become one of those who shall remain standing outside of the door forever.

Do you begin to realize how blind you have been, thinking that you were one of the first, whereas you

now find with anxiety that you are not even on the way? Behold, this is a prompting of the Holy Spirit. If you are deeply concerned about entering on the right way, then let it be your comfort that God is of a like mind. Awake rightly and be concerned about your salvation before you fall asleep in death. You still have an opportunity. Everything thus far neglected can still be retrieved and made good. The race-course of life lies open before you, and the crown of life may yet be obtained. But neglect it no longer; you have slept long enough. This is the time to arise out of your slumber and to run the race set before you, that you may receive the prize. Pray earnestly that you may be heard. Search the Scriptures carefully, that God may enlighten, grieve, and comfort, and transform your heart.

You know that you are on the way, though you do not know whether you are one of the last or one of the first. Let me advise you to press on as diligently to obtain the crown of life, as if you really expected to be one of the first. Though it may seem to you as if you were one of the last, you will nevertheless advance farther into heaven than you expected, and will there find greater blessedness than you had supposed. Amen.

Lenten Sunday. Quinquagesima.

Introduction.

I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Thus Christ our Saviour speaks in a parable about His impending suffering. The parable is taken from the custom of that time of completely immersing the person to be baptized. The Saviour means to say that just as one baptized is covered with water, so He must be covered with sores and wales and bathe in His own blood. The words are recorded in Luke 12. 50.

After the great, lamentable misfortune of the fall into sin, man could be saved in only one way: the Son of the living God must become a true man and submit to suffering and death for His brethren, the poor children of Adam, whose nature and fashion He assumed. His whole life was one of suffering. The weaknesses and infirmities of our nature, which He had taken upon Himself, were a constantly oppressive burden, and the poverty and wretchedness to which He had freely submitted on our behalf were sources of unceasing affliction.

Still this was not sufficient for the redemption of the fallen race. The wearisome life which the Saviour led in this world terminated with still more grievous suffer-

ing, with the most severe pains, and with death itself. Jesus foresaw the inevitable. He knew that the poor human race could not be saved by any other means than the strictest payment and the bloodiest atonement. As a true man, with human feelings, He shuddered at the gruesome anguish and agony and the dreadful pains which He must suffer. But He did not hesitate in the least. He had resolutely determined with His heavenly Father to save the sinful world. The great work of redemption could not by Him be called in question. On the contrary, the Saviour longed to finish it, though it had to be done by the most grievous shedding of His blood. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," He says, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

It is considered to be something great and excellent, when a person calmly submits to the inevitable. It is considered to be an evidence of great friendship, when some one lovingly and freely takes upon himself to endure the hardships of another. But to long for the greatest pains merely in order to save others — this is an entirely divine love, shown by no one except our divine Saviour.

Proposition.

THE GREAT LOVE OF OUR SAVIOUR AS MANIFESTED IN HIS SUFFERING FOR US

- I. The great love.
- II. How we should reciprocate this love.

First Part.

The Great Love.

The love of Jesus is great, for He is great who has loved us. It is a great act of friendship, when a man is willing to suffer for another, and it becomes greater, the more exalted and noble the person is who thus suffers for the other. It is, then, the very greatest love, when the most exalted God Himself has been pleased to suffer on our behalf. Our Saviour is also true God, the Son of God, by whom all things are made. In His divine nature He is immutable, and hence exalted above suffering; but He became a man in order that He might, in His human nature, suffer and die for us. God, who is the Highest, desired to thus humiliate Himself and to bear the punishment for our sins. The Almighty, whose power is manifested in the creatures, from the largest, who frighten us with their bigness, to the least, who by reason of their smallness escape our vision, God whose wisdom is portrayed in every flower of the field and in every blade of grass trampled under our feet, was "delivered unto the Gentiles. He was mocked, scoffed at, spitted upon, scourged and crucified."

The love of Jesus Christ shown us in His suffering is great, for we, the objects of that love, are small and quite inconsiderable. The Creator has been pleased to suffer for those created by Him, indeed, for creatures who had not remained in the perfection which they had received at His hands, but had fallen into the most nefarious wretchedness and the most horrible wickedness. When a great general falls in battle, it is customary to erect a monument to his memory, bearing the in-

scription that he died for his beloved fatherland. Indeed, it is true that he died for his brethren and friends at home, but Jesus did much more: He died for His enemies. The apostle Paul has therefore erected the following memorial to the once crucified Saviour, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The greatest Love has died for His enemies, the holy God for such as were an abomination in His sight, the righteous God for those who had greatly offended Him.

The love of Jesus, shown us in His suffering, is great, for the suffering which He endured was great. He was tightly bound when delivered to the Gentiles. He was buffeted by those who mocked Him. He was bent down toward the earth and scourged. Taunts and jeers followed Him to the cross. His patient silence did not deter His enemies from following Him with their mockery to the very end. And yet His physical suffering can scarcely be compared with His mental agony, for the Son of man endured anguish unto the sweating of blood and unto the pains of hell, even to the extent that He was forsaken by God. This is what the Son of man suffered for us, until He gave the greatest evidence of His love by dying for us. Though a friend may sacrifice much for another, he nevertheless saves his own life, as the dearest of all. When a friend loves unto death, love can go no further. Jesus has given evidence of such love, as He also avers, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The love of Jesus, shown in His suffering, was great,

for great was the distress from which He delivered us. Look at your life. Consider what you have done. Judge of what you have merited. How would you fare, if you had no Saviour? What would be your lot at the end of your life? Hell would be gaping to devour every soul on departing hence, if Jesus had not "ransomed them from the grave and redeemed them from death." He assumed the debt and paid it. The guilty debtor need not now be delivered into the hands of the executioners until the debt be paid. Jesus has endured the punishment for sinners, and they may be spared. God reveals His righteousness by faith unto them that live by faith, "passing over the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God." It was through His death that Jesus "brought to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," and delivered them who before had been in the service of sin and subject to the bondage of Satan.

The love of Jesus, shown in His suffering, is great, for great is the glory which is thereby secured. "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Every one converted from the service of unrighteousness unto faith in Jesus Christ becomes righteous, for His fulfillment of the law is attributed unto every one that "believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly." When a person becomes thus justified by faith, he obtains "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He enters into union with Christ, who lives in such a person, and for whom to live is Christ. He may indeed rarely experience the full comfort of his justification and the joy of his election, but he nevertheless looks

with patience for the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," and he fights the good fight, confidently hoping to gain the imperishable crown of glory.

Second Part.

How We Should Reciprocate the Great Love, Which the Saviour Has Shown Us in His Suffering.

He that has received open eyes of understanding, anointed with eyesalve, enabling him to rightly evaluate the Saviour's love, must, in the first place, consider the suffering of Jesus greater than all his sins. If Jesus is greater than you, then His payment is also greater than your debts. He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. A grievous suffering like His cannot be in vain for any one who rightly wishes to appropriate its blessings. The powerful fetters of Satan cannot avail against so mighty a Redeemer. He is the stronger One, who overcomes the strong enemy; "He taketh from him his whole armor, and divideth his spoils." Honor, then, your Saviour as He deserves to be honored. Acknowledge Him as the mighty Saviour that He is, and do not make of yourself an exception to His unlimited redemption. If He has borne the burden of your sins, then lay them down at His feet, and if He has opened the dungeon of darkness, you should no longer remain in your wretchedness, since the Son of God offers to make you free indeed.

If you have been set free, thank Him for your deliverance, and render unto Him praise for your redemption. As a bird escaping from the trap, immediately, on the very first branch where its feet find rest, begins to chirp its song of gladness over its deliverance, and as

a prisoner, losing his fetters, stretches out his hands to his deliverer, thanking him for his new-won liberty, so likewise should every saved soul, when the snare is broken and he is set free, raise his voice in praise to his Saviour and lift high his arms to glorify his Redeemer. All creatures praise Him as their Creator; surely, then, man should glorify Him as Saviour. "The heavens declare the glory of God," every bird pipes its own lay to His honor, every brooklet ripples its gladsome voice in acknowledgement of Him who guides its course. Should not man, then, praise Him the more — man, whom He has saved from the greatest distress? Though weakness constrains his voice and destruction fetters his tongue, he should nevertheless, standing on the shore of the deep waters of misery, praise God for his salvation and join with the church triumphant, "saying with a great voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.'"

If Jesus has given Himself in death for you, you should give yourself to Him. Though you are only a poor and wretched creature, give Him your heart. It is a small reward for the great labor which He has had to save you from your sins. Since He willingly assumed the fashion of a servant on your behalf, you should feel in duty bound to serve Him all the days of your life. He showed you such love while you were yet His enemy, and therefore you should feel all the more constrained to love Him, when the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart. St. John says, "We love, because He first loved us," and again, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Since Je-

sus has been pleased to suffer inexpressibly much for you, should not you be willing to suffer a little for Him? Of what consequence is the slight disgrace caused you by the world in comparison with the shame which the Son of Gust must suffer to save you from eternal death? "Consider, therefore, Him that hath endured such gain-saying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls." If Jesus suffered, bearing His cross and your heavy burden of sin, you should not deem it grievous to deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow Him.

Application.

Such, O man, is the love which your Saviour has shown you. Where, then, is the love which you should show Him in return? Are you not one of those concerning whom the Lord complains,

"They have rewarded me evil for good,
And hatred for my love."

You know that He hates an ungodly manner of life, but you persist in living thus. You know that intentional sins provoke Him to anger, and still you continue to violate His commandments. Do you not fear that the wrath of the Lord Jesus will, upon His final coming in judgment, prove quite as great as the grace shown at His first advent and birth? Alas! How can it be otherwise? His righteousness must be quite as infinite as His mercy. How shamefully you change His grace into opportunity, license, and boldness to sin! Jesus has redeemed you, but you again give yourself into bondage.

Jesus has bought you to be His own, and you have surrendered yourself to the power of Satan. Wretched creature, how do you treat yourself? Jesus has shown you love, but you act as though you were your own worst enemy. You cast yourself into the misery from which Jesus has saved you. You thoughtlessly neglect the salvation which He has procured. Who shall save you, if you thus persist until the hour of death to neglect so great a redemption? Who shall be able to bless you, if your Saviour who has procured salvation for you has been neglected during your lifetime, and if in your death you have been by Him eternally condemned? Verily, there is no other Saviour than He. When He shall no longer be a Saviour, but throughout eternity a judge and an avenger, what can you expect but judgment, condemnation, and eternal pain?

If your sins sicken your heart, if Satan is threatening you, and if you fear death, then know that you are redeemed. Learn to know it more and more in the words of life, and pray God that you may be enabled to believe it with certainty and assurance in your heart. Your sins shall then be forgiven, just as surely as Jesus has made payment for them, and you shall be delivered from the power of darkness, just as surely as He has redeemed the world. You shall be clad in His eternal righteousness when you put off the defiled garments of your own righteousness. The righteousness of Jesus shall become, not only your everyday attire, in which you shall walk securely through this earthly vale of misery, but also your festal garb, in which you shall be able to stand before Him on the great day of His coming.

But remember that when Jesus has received you to be

His own you cannot longer live unto yourself. All that you have belongs to Him and should be submitted to Him, sacrificed for His service. Do not become a backslider, who believes for a while, but falls away in times of temptations. Seek your comfort in His love alone, your enlightenment in His word, and your hope in His righteousness. Then shall your love to Him, kindled in your heart by the gospel of His love, be fanned into a brighter flame and increased by that same love of Christ. If you love Him who has first loved you, you must also love them that He has loved, for "if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart. You shall then, in childlike innocence, enjoy the peace of children, and though this peace be disturbed by the threats of Satan, it shall not fail, but rather be translated into the beautiful "rest that remaineth for the people of God." The comforts of the Holy Spirit, though here often covered with the miseries of this life, shall be changed into eternal joy. It is the Eternal who has procured this for you, and the righteousness which He has given is also eternal. "Even as He is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true." Amen.

Midsummer Day.

Introduction.

When a sinner has been awakened and the eyes of his understanding have been opened to see that he has been on an evil way, he also becomes aware that an innumerable multitude is found on that same way to perdition. When his heart has thereupon found peace, and when his soul has found assurance that he is on the way of life, then he looks about himself with a keen eye to find a few hidden Christians, and he listens attentively for the speech that might perchance betray a secret disciple of Jesus, whom he might get as his companion. He finds, however, that the multitude is concerned about earthly gains and worldly pleasures, that a great number of those who appear to be somewhat different are in error, merely having the appearance of godliness, while only a very inconsiderable number "work out their salvation with fear and trembling."

His experience, then, agrees with the words of the Saviour, that they are few that find the way of life. Indeed, he sees that the number of those who rush to perdition is even larger than he had at first supposed. His heart is moved with amazement, mortification, and pity, and he wonders why so many people are thus unfortunate. Has not the Son of God made a sufficient

payment, and are not His merits valid for all? Has not God in His Word shown Himself concerned about the salvation of all men, and has not His Word wrought mightily in those who have been moved thereby? The real reason for the deplorable state of affairs is none other than that which Jesus charged against Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not!" Nevertheless, this contrariness appears in so many ways and in so many different conditions that we have reason to say that there are many obstacles that would hinder people from entering upon the way of salvation. I have thought of mentioning seven of the most important of them, since it is impossible to count them all, not to say, describe them all. If some one, then, has in mind to get saved, though he has not yet begun to seek salvation in earnest, it is, indeed, very important to know the obstacles which would hinder him from accomplishing his purpose. It may be that you will recognize in some of the obstacles which I am going to mention the reason why all the grace of God shown you has hitherto been fruitless. It is very necessary for you to learn to know this, in order that you may with all your heart endeavor to have this obstacle removed, lest you lose your inheritance of eternal joy.

Prayer.

O God of infinite love, it is Thy will that all men should be saved; Thou hast not laid any obstacles in the way; Thou canst and Thou wilt remove the obstacles which originate from ourselves and our spiritual foes. Teach us by Thy Word to know that which still re-

strains us, and make us deeply concerned, by Thy gracious help, to have removed the obstacle which would hinder our entrance and progress on the way of salvation. "Our Father," etc.

Exegesis.

God commands His servants to comfort His people, which He had chosen and redeemed. First, He gives the assurance that the time of deliverance was approaching from the Babylonian captivity and from sins by the fulfillment of the redemption in Jesus Christ. Secondly, He testifies that they already had the forgiveness of sins and a blessing twice as great as the curse which they had brought over themselves by their sins. Thirdly, John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, was to instruct the people of the New Covenant how to accept the Saviour of the world upon His coming in human flesh. To this end, the obstacles in His way must be removed, in order that Jesus might find free entrance into the hearts of sinners. Whereas it is necessary in the very first instance to know the obstacles which are to be removed, I shall present the following.

Proposition.

A FEW OF THE WORST OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF A TRUE CONVERSION

1. Gross ignorance is as great an obstacle in the way of a true conversion as a great mountain is where a new road is to be made.

Ignorance is very great among some people. They do not know the basis of their salvation, nor how they

shall be saved, and still less how they are to rightly use the means of grace. The matter of salvation is quite foreign to them. They are not used to the Word of God. It is, then, not strange that they do not understand what is being preached, nor that they remain quite as unmoved as if they could not hear. Hence, these people live and die with the most pitiable and unreasonable conceptions of the fear of God. They depart as if by chance. They suppose that, since they do no more evil than they feel constrained to for their livelihood, and since they go to church occasionally and even participate in the Lord's Supper twice a year, they surely can go nowhere else than to heaven. But it is quite as impossible to have faith in God before one knows Him as it is to drive across steep mountains before a road is made. It is impossible to come to heaven before one knows the way thither, and to escape from hell if one has never been concerned about it.

2. Another obstacle, quite as great, arises, when a person gives way to his natural antipathy. A feeling of repugnance to religious matters is found among all people. It is subdued by the first movements of grace, but Satan is a past master in the art of quickening it anew. It could be conquered, if you carefully guarded the grace received and made room for it in your heart, if you used the power thus received to fight against yourself. Unless you do so, you will soon grow weary of the Word; its representations become repugnant and later unbearable. You will not accept them, and, for no other reason than this, that you do not wish to, that it is repugnant to you. In this way your condition will

not improve, for God does not force His grace upon any one, and no one will be converted against his will.

3. Some who have been visited by grace are immediately overcome by their sinful habits and by the power of evil desires. This obstacle is in comparison with the two former like a hill over against a mountain, but a hill can be a very ugly hindrance in the way. While sinners are being moved by the Word, their lusts are subdued and, as it were, removed, but the forces of grace are not always equally active. After a time of great activity they frequently subside, leaving a person to himself. Then new incentives and opportunities to sin make their appearance. The lusts are again awakened and rise to their former intensity. The perceptions of grace, tears, longings, and determinations disappear as though they had been mere dreams. The sinner is overcome and laid prostrate in sin, leaving not the slightest trace of the grace which had wrought so mightily in his heart, and he cannot conceive the possibility of any other condition.

4. Some are so entangled in the world that they cannot extricate themselves. Their condition is like that of one traveling over a region filled with rolling hills. There are constant ups and downs, and ere one such experience ends another begins. Sometimes they are possessed with the advantages of earthly prosperity, and then again they are busy endeavoring to overcome the difficulties of adversity. They scarcely catch sight of anything better in the Word, nor become convinced of its necessity ere something turns up, hindering them from pressing onwards. Shortly after their return home from church and, indeed, frequently before they

have time to close the book they are reading at home, something happens that must be attended to, something invites their attention from the heavenly and invisible verities back down to things visible, something occupies the room in their heart, where the Word of God was about to take root. Sometimes it is their friends and comrades in vanity who attract them back to their evil ways. The sinner finds it quite impossible to refuse to follow and in their company he soon gets far away from the narrow gate of repentance and from the true way of life which he had so nearly approached. Here is verified not only the word of Jesus concerning the rich, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," but also the saying of Paul concerning those who indeed are not rich but would love to be wealthy, "They that desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition."

5. Some are hindered by cowardly weakness. They fear the pangs of contrition, which they imagine to be very grievous. This obstacle may be compared with the valleys mentioned in our text. Those who are in this way hindered from conversion experience a sense of dizziness like those who are about to descend into a deep valley. They see only the depths, and it appears as though they were about to fall therein, though, if they proceeded, step by step, they would soon, without any harm, arrive at the bottom. This hindrance often comes from a too lenient bringing up in the home. Their parents may have spoiled them from early childhood carefully shielding them from everything which might have caused them grief. Some look upon sorrow

as the greatest calamity which can happen to them and, hence, studiously avoid everything which might make them sad. The unconverted often entertain the preconceived notion that conversion begins with despair and is followed by unceasing anxiety. This prejudice easily finds entrance into weak souls. If they experience any sorrow over their sins, they look upon it as the precursor of something worse. They therefore make haste to get rid of it and are very much concerned, lest they again come into such a condition. Yes, even though they know by their own experience or by information that the discipline of grace is very moderate, it nevertheless seems too grievous for them. The present is everything to them, and the future seems to them as non-existing. To escape "godly sorrow," they proceed along the way that leads to eternal "weeping and gnashing of teeth." They choose to taste the bitterness of eternal death, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," rather than to endure the feeling of sinful depravity for a season.

6. Some have gotten into the habit of considering everything frivolously. They cannot entertain the first impression of grace long enough to attain stability. Their mind and behavior resemble the crooked roads in our text, which slant from one side to the other and often cause the traveler to fall. Some people do not adhere long to one thing, but grasp for something else, and they never take anything in earnest. They consider it all as trivial. Such minds are easily touched by the Word, but their emotions quite as easily vanish away. If everything pertaining to conversation could be finished during the brief moment while their emo-

tions last, they would be converted, but they cannot bear to take the matter under more serious and prolonged consideration. They scarcely have time to wipe their tears away, ere their minds take flight to something quite different and their thoughts wander far away from the kingdom of God. While they thus dance about the brink of eternity, they unexpectedly fall into its depths, pass unprepared out of time, and proceed with laughter and jesting to the place of torment.

7. Some are hindered by their egotism, false timidity and fearfulness of men. They are like men journeying along a stony road full of jutting unevenness. They constantly become hurt and wounded and eventually grow tired and weary. When the Word is preached aright it happens even to-day, as it did when Jesus himself taught, as we read in John 12. 42, "Even of the rulers many believed on Him, but they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." They wish to be Christians, but in such a way as cannot long endure. They do not wish to confess their Saviour's name before the world, but desire to be disciples in secret. The sneer of the world for the confessors of Jesus hurts their ambition. Hence, they wish to have their Christianity concealed in their hearts to their own satisfaction, but they do not wish to have it revealed in their outward behavior to the glory of the Saviour. They take care lest any one might see them reading the Word of God or find them engaging in prayer. They are thus frequently hindered from Scripture reading and prayer, because they do not wish to let any one see it. They are often tempted to feel ashamed of Jesus, and so they make themselves deserv-

ing of the punishment which will be their lot; for Jesus says, "The Son of man also shall be ashamed of them, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Occasionally they come into quite as dangerous a position as that of Peter, when, like him, they wish to be in the palace of the high priest without being known as belonging to Jesus of Nazareth. It may then happen that, upon being addressed by the men of the world, and in order to escape from their taunts, they blush and stammer something like Peter, "I know not the man." Alas, before the secret work of grace in them can grow in power, as in the case of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa, finally breaking forth in action, it may be choked to death, like an infant covered too well. At any rate, they continually become hurt and wounded on so uneven a way, and some grow weary with it all. Like Pilate they consider it quite impossible to set Jesus at liberty if they can not do this with the consent of the worldly-minded. They excuse themselves, wash their hands in water, and blame others whose behavior they imagine relieves themselves of all responsibility.

Application.

Have you among all these obstacles described recognized that which has hindered you from a true conversion, and can you nevertheless allow this hindrance to remain in your way? If so, how are you going to reach the gate of heaven? If you wish to be hindered from entering the kingdom of God, does not this imply that you wish to be lost? "No," you say, "I wish to be saved." Yes, but you wish to retain such matters as of necessity must hinder you from coming to heaven. You

are quite willing to escape from hell, but you persist in proceeding on the way that surely leads thither. You entertain the very largest and most difficult of all obstacles, namely intentional obstinacy and a persistent and willful opposition.

Are you grieved at heart in perceiving what has hindered you from repentance, and do you fear that it might continue to hinder you, then you may know that God's quickening and calling grace can overcome all obstacles. Be careful to retain this grace which is working in you. Make haste to take refuge in prayer and in the use of the Word, and consider further with yourself that you have received grace to understand your spiritual condition. As the Lord has removed the obstacles which lay in the way of your awakening, so He will also help you through all the difficulties which always meet awakened souls and keep them for some time from faith and the forgiveness of sins.

If you have passed beyond all these obstacles also, you must consider that there are many obstacles even on the way of salvation, which would hinder your progress thereon and prevent your growth in grace. You must not, then, be careless and negligent, if you are to attain to stability in grace and remain steadfast in the faith. See to it "that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction." Let nothing hinder you from hearing Him speak to you in His Word, nor let anything prevent you from speaking with Him in prayer. Let nothing exclude you from appropriating Him in Holy Communion. Then you shall, in spite of all obstacles which meet you, "in all these things be more than conqueror through Him that loved you." Amen.

Seventh Sunday After Trinity.

Introduction.

Lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only. In this way Matthew concludes his story of the peculiar occurrence described in the seventeenth chapter.

When Jesus had at one time gone apart with a few of His disciples to a mountain, it happened that the "form of a servant," which He had taken upon Himself, was changed into the royal glory which belonged to Him ever since He had been born to be a king. The disciples who were accustomed to see Jesus associating with sinners, now found Him in conversation with two of the "Spirits of the New Jerusalem." They found themselves infolded in a cloud and possessed with great joy, but when they again came to themselves and "lifted up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only."

When a sinner first opens the eyes of his understanding, they are turned down upon his unsaved soul and lost condition. Shame and timidity are associated with downcast eyes. Esra describes the dejection of an awakened soul in such wise, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our guiltiness is grown up into the heavens." The law enjoins men

to look especially upon themselves. It urges them to compare their depravity with God's holiness, and their guilt with His righteousness. The Holy Spirit, however, thereupon lifts the eyes of their understanding to Jesus only. The glory of Christ, emanating from the words of the gospel, enlightens their heart and attracts their thoughts to Jesus, while the love of God revealed in His promises comforts their frightened heart and gives them courage to turn to Jesus.

It is blessed when a believing soul looks in the Scriptures for Jesus only. He is the center and essential part of the word, and the Scriptures bear testimony of Him. When therefore the soul has learned to consider everything in the Word of God as leading to Jesus or derived from Him, then its searching has discovered the true treasure and the costly pearl.

It is a blessed thing when the believing soul in prayer fixes his uplifted eyes of faith upon Jesus only, not looking about for his dispersed thoughts, nor backward upon Satan, who threatens with the assertion that the prayers are to no avail, nor inwardly upon his own slothfulness and slight devotion, but above himself to Jesus, "who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

As Jesus only was the main object of Paul's preaching, so that he "determined not to know anything" except that which was related to the Saviour who once had been crucified, so shall also my main topic be Jesus Only. May He alone grant us enlightenment in the Word, strength and salvation through the Word, and may God hear us, when we ask for this for Jesus' sake. "Our Father," etc.

Proposition.

JESUS ONLY

- I. In the awakening, as its object.
- II. In justification and the new birth, as its foundation.
- III. In sanctification, as its power.

First Part.

It is Jesus only who has provided that the Holy Spirit works upon a secure heart unto its awakening. Paul says that the awakening takes place with reference to Jesus, in connection with, and as a result of, His redemption, which was perfected when God awakened Jesus from the dead. The blood of Jesus was shed even for those who have "counted it an unholy thing," and it bespeaks mercy even for them. God is jealous for the honor of His Son; He desires to show that the atonement is valid and powerful, and He therefore permits His Holy Spirit to quicken the slumbering consciences. Jesus gave His life for the wandering sheep, and He "goes after that which is lost." It is the suffering of Jesus that pleads for pardon. It is His prayer which quickens the movements of grace in dead hearts, and it is by virtue of His merits that gifts are provided even for those who have fallen away.

Jesus only is the basis of a sinner's awakening, but He is also the object thereof, for it is the object of the law to urge sinners to accept the grace offered by the gospel. Paul teaches that Christ and justification through faith in Christ are the objects of the law, "Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every

one that believeth." Then again he describes the end of awakening as follows, "The law has been our tutor unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Hear then, O man, that the law causes grief in order that you may eagerly accept the comfort proclaimed in the gospel: that Jesus has paid for all your sins. The law frightens you, threatening you with eternal torment, in order that you may take the refuge which is being offered you with Jesus. When God, in His law, demands perfection in everything, His true object is that you may become a partaker of the righteousness of your Saviour, who has fulfilled the law for you.

Second Part.

A person becomes justified through faith alone, but Jesus only is the foundation of faith. He has provided that an awakened sinner can come to faith. Therefore an apostle* says that "Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith." Jesus has not only atoned for sins and purchased righteousness, but He has also provided that a sinner shall become a partaker of this grace. And since this is done by faith, Jesus has also provided that the Holy Spirit shall work to that end and grant a true faith, in order that the works of grace may be perfected and that man may appropriate and enjoy the fruits of redemption.

Jesus is the foundation of faith, for it is He of whom the gospel says that He has purchased all the good which the gospel offers to those who are rightly awakened. It is only through the gospel that a man can come to faith, for the gospel speaks of Jesus and, in-

* Paul, acc. to the author.

deed, concerning Jesus only. Any doctrine that does not speak of Jesus, whatever experience and glory it may proclaim, is not the gospel. So then Jesus is in the Word. His suffering, His blood, His obedience and death are proclaimed in the Word, and this is the only means of coming to the right faith.

It is Jesus only whom faith embraces and on whom it relies. When a person, after seeing the awful depth of his own misery, has once caught a right vision of Jesus, he cannot turn his thoughts from Him. Jesus becomes everything to such an one, and everything else is "counted as loss and dung." He seeks for Jesus, comes to Him, longs for His righteousness, prays in His name, and hopes in Him alone. He presses on that he may grasp Christ more securely, and that he may trust Him with more certainty and with greater boldness.

Jesus only is the basis and main cause of justification. Jesus only is considered by God when He makes a person righteous. God merely sees that the sinner has accepted Christ and that he is in Christ, in fellowship with Him. God does not wrathfully count such a person's sins, for they are covered with the blood of Jesus. The Saviour is sinless, and a justified man is considered quite as free from guilt as Jesus was when He had paid the whole debt of sin, and as pure, free from the corruption of sin, as Jesus has always been. Nor does God graciously look upon a person's good deeds; no, He looks only on His beloved Son. If He were to look upon our good deeds, He would also see the sins wherewith these good deeds are contaminated, and He would by virtue of His righteousness be compelled

to exact punishment. God looks upon His beloved Son only, in order that He may find something perfect to rest His holy eyes upon. The atonement and righteousness of Jesus only are then by God attributed to the justified sinner. Nothing else will avail and satisfy an awakened soul. Nothing else suffices for our salvation from eternal fire; no other righteousness is valid and pleasing before God than that of His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. It is by reason of this alone that God forgives sins and receives us into sonship with Him. Sins are forgiven, because Jesus "blotted out the bond against us" with His pierced, bleeding hand, and for the sake of His childlike obedience every one that believes on Him becomes a child of God. For Jesus' sake every child of God is considered like Jesus Himself, and a like verdict is rendered in heaven at the time of every act of justification as was proclaimed with reference to Jesus at the transfiguration, "This is my beloved son [this is my beloved daughter], in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus only is the basis of the new birth, for it is faith in Him alone that brings regeneration of the heart. Paul expresses this in Eph. 2. 6, saying, "God made us to sit with Christ in the heavenly places." When a man fixes his attention upon Jesus alone and upon the holiness which He purchased and perfected when He had "His delight in the law of the Lord," he receives the Spirit which grants full enlightenment in the Word of God. The believer then becomes like the Lord Jesus, being "transformed into the same image." The light of the glory of Jesus enlightens the soul to see aright and to perceive clearly the heavenly light in

the Word of God, when the Sun of Righteousness arises and God takes His dwelling in the soul. God then also grants the believer a new mind, "the mind which was also in Christ Jesus." His will becomes our will, and we thereupon always desire to be humble like Jesus, meek like Jesus, obedient like Jesus, pure in heart like Jesus, and occasionally we are also able to be thus, for in the new birth we received "a clean heart and a right spirit" and a mind like that "which was also in Christ Jesus."

Third Part.

It is in sanctification that the power of our Lord Jesus Christ is best shown, for it is Jesus who provides the power to put off the old man and put on the new. If you are to get rid of your wicked thoughts, if you are to quench your evil desires, if you are to succeed in overcoming your old sinful habits, verily, there is no other help for this in heaven or on earth than that provided by Jesus only. He has conquered sin, and "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," for He is "the Lord which sanctifies." "The sanctification of the spirit" is a sure result of His redemption. If you were unable to resist sin, if you were compelled to fall therein again, then the forgiveness would be useless and the atonement in vain. But His merit is complete and perfect, and He has arranged that the merit imputed to you at once and immediately in justification shall also gradually be wrought in you in sanctification. Jesus has not only stood in your stead as a just man who has had His delight in God's commandments and whose righteous-

ness is imputed to you as though you had always been just, but He has also brought about that you actually become just and obtain more and more delight in God's law according to the inner man.

The more a person grows in faith in the Lord Jesus, the more he will also increase in good works. You do not, as you may suppose, receive more faith and grace from God by virtue of your watchfulness, meekness, patience, and devotion, but quite the reverse. In the proportion that Jesus becomes great and glorious to you, in the proportion that He becomes indispensable, you will increase in all the virtues that derive their strength from Him. The more faith, which is the origin of love, increases, the more will also love, which is the result of faith, increase.

Love for Jesus is the chief motive unto sanctification in a converted soul. It is love for Jesus that makes the believers submissive to Him in trials and sorrow, enabling them to bear His cross when the Lord finds it needful for their sanctification. Paul designates the knowledge of the love of Christ as the most immediate cause leading to one's being "filled unto all the fulness of God." In like manner it is love for Jesus that makes the most pleasing sins abominable and the most grievous duties light. It is love for Jesus that enables us to love all men, because He has deigned to make them all objects of His love. It is love for Jesus which opens our heart so that we may have confidence in those who are known to be partakers of that same love of Christ. It is love for Jesus which quenches our anger when we are offended, which kills hatred and enables the believer to love his enemies, since Jesus

has loved them too, precisely as He loved us even while we were yet His enemies.

Jesus is the most splendid and only perfect pattern to follow in sanctification. Do not ask to become like this one or that one, but pray that you may become like Jesus. Do not attempt to imitate the talents of others, nor their measure of grace, but walk in the footsteps of your Saviour. Along that way you shall more and more attain to that whereunto by your election you were ordained, namely, to be "conformed to the image of His Son."

Application.

Do you, O confident sinner, know whom you are warring against, whom you are scoffing at? It is not the servant who proclaims the message which you contradict, not human beings whom you mock for their spiritual interests, but Jesus only, Jesus, whose words are being spoken to you and whose members they are whom you vituperate. Rest assured that Jesus alone is able to overrule your wickedness and to judge and punish you. How dreadful it will be for you when you lie upon your death bed at the end of the way to realize that the Son's wrath is upon you! How awful the mere appearance of Jesus when, in the resurrection, you raise your head from the grave!

Take heed to what you have heard, O mournful souls, remember that Jesus only is the object of your awakening. Do not therefore seek for more regret nor for an immediate improvement in your course of life, but seek for Jesus only. Where, indeed, can you look for salvation except to your Saviour? Where can you find

salvation except in Him? It is nowhere else to be found. When you have found Him and in Him righteousness and strength, when His righteousness is your support in temptations, when His might is your succor, lo, then you have enough in Him, for you have all in Him. If then it should ever happen that you, like the first disciples, should in spirit see somewhat of His glory and "taste the powers of the age to come," and if this glory should thereupon disappear, then do not look for Moses or Elias, but be contented with the grace granted to those early disciples of whom we read, "When they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only."

When the peace of Christ has brought you reinvigoration and His promises have given you assurance of grace, then it shall also be your lot, at the approach of death, when your eyes can no longer see the things of this world, then the vision of your soul shall be opened and endowed with heavenly light to see the great glory, world without end, face to face, — Jesus only. Amen.

Eighth Sunday After Trinity.

Introduction.

Enter ye in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it.

This admonition of our Lord Jesus embraces the chief thing a man should accomplish while here on earth. It also describes the two different ways men walk upon. One of these you are certainly going, O man! Note, then, their character, and hear how they terminate, that you may understand which way you are on, and that you may know beforehand where you will eventually stop. "Enter ye in by the narrow gate, etc." Mt. 7. 13, 14.

The Saviour uses the figure of a way to set forth the spiritual attitude of a man toward God, but the entering into this attitude He represents as a matter by itself, just as a gate is quite a different thing from the way to which it gives access. In like manner the beginning both of the way to life and of the way to destruction is something quite different from the continuous walking upon the way. To pass through a gate and to enter upon the way to which the gate gives access requires but little time. Similarly the

entrance through the narrow gate of repentance leading to faith is of comparatively brief duration; so likewise the lapsing away from faith into intentional sins, leading in upon the way to destruction, can be quickly accomplished. There is this difference, however, that just as it is easier to pass through a wide gate than a narrow one, so it is easier to fall away from God than to return to Him. There is this similarity, nevertheless, that as soon as one has passed through either gate, one is immediately upon the way, advancing nearer and nearer to the place whither that way leads. As soon as you have come to faith in Jesus, you are on the way to heaven, constantly approaching your full salvation; while, on the other hand, if you have turned away from God into intentional sins, you are already on the way to hell, approaching it nearer and nearer, day by day.

Our Saviour described the conditions appertaining to these ways, saying that many enter by the wide gate, while they are few that find the narrow gate and the way to life. There are many walking on the broad way to destruction. They enter, as it were by chance, without search or effort. On the contrary, it also happens that some who seek for the narrow way of life do not find it, for they do not seek it in the right manner. They use blind guides, follow false doctrines, depend on feelings, or strive after good deeds. There are not many who seek after the way of life at all, and only a few of these find what they seek. Jesus says concerning this way, "Few be they that find it."

It was by reason of these facts that Jesus gave His admonition unto repentance, "Enter ye in by the nar-

row gate." He thereupon immediately speaks about the wide gate and the broad way, wishing to show that, if you have not experienced a true conversion, you must certainly have entered by the wide gate, and you are now on the broad way. The Saviour nevertheless also represents your condition in such a way, as if there were frequent opportunities and occasions to repent, yes, as if you were often near the narrow gate of repentance. He does not wish to have you leave it thus, however. Jesus is not satisfied to have you near the narrow gate; He wishes you to enter thereby. He does not say, "Come near the gate," nor, "Stand in the narrow gate." No, He says, "Enter ye by the narrow gate." You are not on the way to life until you have passed through the narrow gate. If you have experienced emotions only, you have merely come to the gate, but you have not entered, you have not come to faith. If you have begun to realize that your condition is not right, you are, as it were, standing in the gate, you are in the process of repentance. But, dear friend, see to it that you enter and pass through this narrow gate, that by means of prayer and the Word you may come to an earnest seeking after grace in Christ. The wide gate is near at hand, and it may fare with you as with many others who have stood in the gate and looked in upon the way of life, but who thought that the gate was too narrow or the way too much straitened, or were frightened into retreat or were enticed to return. They have thus come out of the narrow gate and found the broad gate close at hand. Satan then induces them to enter in by this gate, and they pass through rapidly and advance at full speed on the broad way.

Proposition.

SOME REMARKABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WAY OF SALVATION AND THE WAY OF DESTRUCTION.

1. In their beginning.
2. In their continuation.
3. In their termination.

First Part.

The Difference Between the Way of Salvation and the Way of Destruction in Their Beginnings.

Paul described the way of destruction, saying that men there live according to the flesh, and he adds that such a life terminates with a condition which he calls death, "If ye live after the flesh, ye must die." When the word "flesh" is used in such a connection in the Scriptures that we can understand that it signifies something evil and harmful, then it signifies our sinful depravity, the original sin, the inherent evil, and the constant inclination to transgress the law. When a man begins to live in such a way that the law is being recklessly transgressed, when he pursues his evil desires, permitting evil to prevail in his life, then such an one begins "to live after the flesh," and he is at the beginning of the way to destruction.

The entrance to the way of destruction is wide and easy. It is not hard to find it, and it seems so easy for a person to begin such a life. He gets rid of the troublesome studying of the Word, and he chooses some other kind of literature to read or, at any rate, some other way of passing the time and spending his leisure

moments. To be alone seems depressive and horrible, but no recourse is taken to prayer. Then the fallen sinner puts no restraint upon his evil propensities, for the entrance upon the way of destruction takes place precisely when the passions are given freedom, when a person consents to sin.

The entrance to the way of destruction is dark. When a person neglects to "walk in the light and believe on the light," he gets into gloominess and darkness. He becomes blind and cannot see the light, nor receive enlightenment and come to certainty. Soon he cannot even endure the light, but "hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd." He "walketh in the darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." While in the state of slumber and sleeping he has slowly and imperceptibly come upon the way of destruction, and he even advances a long way thereon, before he becomes aware that he has gone astray.

Paul describes the way of life, saying, that when a person walks on it, there is in him something which the apostle calls "spirit," by which a person overcomes the deeds of the flesh. This way terminates with a condition which the apostle calls "to live." "If by the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." When the word "spirit" is used in the Scriptures, referring to something characteristic of those who are converted, something at war against our inherent evil, then this word signifies the new spiritual mind, which has been wrought by the Spirit of God in a regenerated heart, and the new spiritual powers granted by the same Spirit, enabling a person to "mortify the deeds

of the body." The beginning on the way of life, then, takes place when a person gets this spirit, as David expresses it, "O God, renew a right spirit within me."

The beginning on the way of life is narrow and difficult. It is hard to give up a false hope, to tear away the very foundation on which one has so long built, and to surrender the treacherous comfort to which one has so tenaciously clung. It is hard to feel the judgment with which one has been judged, "because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God," to see oneself lost and to perceive that one is entirely ruined. The entrance also becomes narrow, by virtue of the fact that, since a sinner cannot take any of his sins with him through the narrow gate, the evil desires of the flesh press on, endeavoring to prevent the creation of a new spirit in the heart. Satan and his people surround a person who is about to be converted, and crowd him, as it were, in the gate to life with insinuations and mockery, thus endeavoring to worry and hinder him.

The entrance to the way of life is, however, also light. Even if there is no comfort in the beginning of conversion, there is nevertheless enlightenment. If the awakened sinner cannot remember the Word as he would like, he can at any rate read and understand it. Where before there was ignorance there is now knowledge, and where there had been knowledge, or where knowledge has been acquired, there now arises enlightenment, for the light of the Word shines in the heart. It is becoming day, and the ruddy dawn of a larger measure of grace is already heralding the approach of "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings."

Second Part.

The Difference between the Way of Salvation and the Way of Perdition in Their Continuation.

The continuation on the way of salvation takes place when one converted is busy at mortifying the deeds of the flesh by the spirit. "Deeds of the flesh," these are the things wrought, or brought about, by the flesh, inwardly and outwardly. Though the spirit cannot put the flesh itself to death, but must leave it alive even in one rightly converted, it can at least "mortify the deeds of the flesh." As soon as the deeds of the flesh come forth, they are attacked in spirit by the believer and demolished quite as completely as the flesh itself will be destroyed in a blessed death. The passions are suppressed with prayer, faults are rectified with watching and self-denial, the will is broken during sore temptations, and the residue of bad habits is consumed in the fire of affliction.

Such progress cannot take place without difficulties, for the way of life is narrow. You cannot there go where you will, for there is not room for choice, on so narrow a way. It therefore seems difficult even to God's children. They do not always fare as they think and had supposed that they should. They are not left free to choose the conditions they are to pass through, nor to stake out the changes they are to experience. The way of life is narrow. You cannot travel with comfort on it, nor carry with you much baggage. A believing soul cannot follow his own willfulness, nor leave room for the persuasions of his temperament, but must remember, "That through many

tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." The narrow way leads to the end that we may be "glorified with Christ" but it also leads "through the great tribulation," where we must suffer with Christ. One must be careful when journeying along a narrow way, for there are many obstacles, not, indeed, right on the way, but beside it, always near at hand, for the way is narrow. True Christianity, indeed, offers no obstacles to our progress in grace, but we have many associations that offer conflicting duties, thus impeding our way.

It is true that progress on the way of salvation is made with difficulty, but progress is nevertheless made, for it is promoted by the Spirit of God. Upon this way the believers enjoy the companionship of the Holy Spirit. The apostle says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God," but we may also say that as many as are God's children are thus led by the Spirit. They are by Him urged to advance, lest slothfulness might deter them. They are led by the Holy Spirit, lest, when stumbling by reason of their infirmity, they might fall and destroy themselves. The Holy Spirit makes their steps more certain and their walk more secure the more He is permitted to remove the spirit of bondage and to discipline them in the right spirit of adoption, "Whereby we constantly cry, Abba, dear Father." When some great suffering or temptation impends and is near at hand, the children of God are strengthened by the Spirit of God, "who bears witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God."

Progress along the way to perdition is made, when

the unconverted "live after the flesh." The carnal mind becomes the chief originator and motive power impelling the sinner in all his actions. Original sin dominates his life. Indeed, he lives in sin and finds his life there.

Progress along this way takes place imperceptibly, for the way to perdition is broad. It resembles a large, broad field, where one cannot know with any real certitude how far one has advanced. Hence, secure sinners cannot notice any particular change in their life, whether for better or worse. This is especially the case with those who feel secure by reason of their honesty. Their inward evil increases. An unconverted man gains more and more stability in his carnal mind. He becomes stronger and stronger in his prejudices and erroneous principles. He becomes more and more unresponsive to the Word of God and, at the same time, all the more obstinate in his false hope. It is the inward carnal life which especially increases in these apparently honest sinners.

The progress on the way to perdition becomes even more imperceptible in those who have the appearance of actually walking on the way of salvation. They have the appearance of spirituality, while they live after the flesh. Their speech is spiritual, but their mind is carnal. They advance more and more in hypocrisy, and their false godliness makes them more and more like him who transforms himself to resemble an angel of light.

Progress on the way to perdition is associated with great freedom from care. Indeed, it is the increase of this freedom from care which shows that a person is on

the way to condemnation. Their way is so broad that there is little need of carefulness to remain thereon. The unconverted have the whole field of sins before them. They may choose whatever they best like, and all the by-ways lead to eternal destruction. Yea, on so broad a way there is ample room for all lusts, plenty of room for a careless life, and nothing to hinder a person from serving and enjoying the lusts. This freedom from care becomes especially great in the case of those who have been awakened and concerned for their salvation, but who have stifled the cry of conscience. When a person who has harbored one devil has swept his house clean and has thereupon received eight in his heart; when a person who has fallen into gross sins stops his remorse and feels satisfied with a decent life; when the quickenings of conscience are turned into false comfort and a specious spirituality, arising from false learning; and when one who has walked in his own self-righteousness ends with the abuse of evangelical grace, then progress along the way to perdition takes place with all the more freedom from care, inasmuch as these people advance along another side of the road than before, and hence suppose that they are walking on another road.

Third Part.

The Difference between the Way of Salvation and the Way of Destruction in Their Termination.

The end of this way is perdition, for the way ends at the place whither it leads. The apostle calls this termination "to die," which, he says, is the sequence of a life after the flesh. It is also clear that he does not

here mean bodily death, for the whole man never dies, the soul never in eternity loses its essential life, but lives on in death and after death. The apostle means eternal death, that is the eternal separation from God which takes place when the bodily death finds a man without union with Christ. After the struggles of bodily death are finished, the lost soul finds that, although it is parted from the body, the pangs of death still exist, yea, are every moment renewed and shall so continue forever. What a gnawing feeling of want must then fill the lost soul, when God has departed, with all his goodness, mercy, and comfort! What horror the unfortunate one must experience, when he perceives the presence of the evil spirit, and must forever remain under its control! What an affliction to hear the moaning of the condemned as well as one's own, to see their agony and to suffer inexpressible pain! Here the way of destruction terminates in torment never to be allayed, never to cease, in "the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth," in hell and the flames of fire, "the lake of fire, which is the second death."

The way of salvation, on the other hand, ends in eternal glory and joy. This the apostle calls "to live," saying, "If ye by the spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The life of a Christian, which is a constant warfare of the spirit to put the deeds of the flesh to death, terminates with death, and then life eternal begins. In death a man begins to live aright, never more to die. If his condition is then blessed, it may be called life indeed, as the Scriptures also call it. If the beginning of a Christian's journey along the way of

salvation has been difficult, the end nevertheless is full of joy. If, in the continuation, he has passed through much wretchedness, the end eventually attained is indescribably glorious. At the end of this race-course there is the eternal prize of grace, "the crown of glory that fadeth not away." The narrow way terminates "in the bosom of Abraham," where Lazarus enjoys comfort; in paradise, where the repentant thief even on the day of his death was with Christ; in the Father's house in the many mansions, where the Son has prepared a room for every disciple. After much tribulation the faithful soul finds rest from its labor, even "the sabbath rest, which remaineth for the people of God." He forgets the dangers he has passed through and finds "fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore," in the presence of God, in the "kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world."

Application.

I have to-day set before you the way to life and the way to death. I have described the way of salvation and the way of destruction. See to it that you may ascertain what way you are on. May it be that you have never seen or understood this? Surely, you should not thus walk to eternity by chance; you should know whither you are going, lest you may land where you had not expected and find that you had gone astray, when you cannot return.

If you notice that you are on the "way of wickedness," then this is the beginning leading to the right way. Take the Word for your enlightenment, and pray the Holy Spirit to be your companion. You will then

certainly enter upon the right way, for you thus come to Christ, who is the right way of life. If you have advanced to the extent that you have a spirit which puts to death the deeds of the flesh, then take these words of the Lord for your guide, "This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Be concerned that, by a right use of the Word, of prayer, and of Holy Communion, you may advance more and more along the way of salvation to the mortification and laying off of the flesh and the deeds thereof, by the spirit which gathers strength unto assurance in faith through increasing knowledge of Jesus Christ, unto earnestness in love, and patience in hope, thus being assured that you are on the way of life, "for few are they that find it." Amen.

Ninth Sunday After Trinity

In the Name of the Great Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

What shall I do? The steward in our text put this question to himself, when he realized that he was near his fall. In a wretched world, full of toil and sorrow, this sad question is not infrequently heard. Men have fascinating speculations, but some unexpected accident upsets their plans, and they are cast into greater difficulties than before. Then all shrewdness disappears, and hope is changed into perplexity. In this condition a person looks round about everywhere for counsel and help, inquiring with anxiety, "What shall I do?" Luk. 16. 3.

With most people this concern extends only to the misery pertaining to this life. O confident sinner, either you never think as far as eternity, or you consider it an easy matter to be saved. You consider it great, important, and fortunate to feel good while here, to be glad, to get what you want in life, but thoughts concerning your eternal welfare you leave for an advanced age, for the sick-bed, or for the time of death, as though the reflections of a few brief moments, and a few sighs were thinking enough, provision enough, for your soul and for eternity, while your whole life-time has not sufficed for the innumerable concerns for this world and for your body.

If you stopped to think why you have come into this world, and whither you shall go when you must depart; how helpless you are with reference to your soul's salvation; how many and powerful enemies surround you; how unexpectedly death may come upon you; how great is your guilt before God; how long eternity is, and how impossible it is there to repent—if you meditate on these matters, then, like the steward, you would begin to worry and, even with reference to your salvation, earnestly inquire, "What shall I do?"

Indeed, you cannot do anything for your salvation. Your Saviour has done everything to purchase it for you. The Holy Spirit has undertaken to do everything to have you share salvation. The only thing for you to do is to use the means of grace, accept grace, and not resist the workings of the Holy Spirit. We do not wish to enter more deeply into these meditations, until we have found occasion in the Gospel of the day and sought God's grace for the performance. We ask this in the Saviour's name, praying, "Our Father," etc.

Proposition.

THE FIRST WORKINGS OF GRACE BY WHICH
THE HOLY SPIRIT SEEKS TO AWAKEN
CONFIDENT SINNERS TO ANXIETY
FOR THEIR ETERNAL SALVATION

1. The first workings of grace.
2. A great number act in an entirely wrong way when spiritual emotions arise.
3. The correct and only way to take when anxiety for salvation arises in the soul.

First Part.

*The First Workings of Grace, whereby the Holy Spirit
Seeks to Awaken Secure Sinners to Anxiety
for Their Eternal Salvation.*

“There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods.” So we read in the Gospel. God is this rich man, “the same Lord of all, rich unto all that call upon him.” A lot of this riches, both in the kingdom of nature and of grace, He has given you, as stewards, to use and to care for. The servant in the Gospel wasted his master’s goods, not by reason of human weakness or inability to look after everything, but by reason of his wickedness, that he did not wish to do better, or his carelessness, being unconcerned about his master’s goods. There are, indeed, many who act no better with reference to the goods of their Lord. Here is one who has good health, but it is being destroyed, either by vice or in riotous enjoyments. Here is one whom God has given opportunity to acquire great learning, but it is being lazily neglected. Here is another on whom God has lavished worldly riches, but he squanders it as a profligate or he hoards it as a miser. To each one of you God has given the most precious of all His treasures, His only begotten Son, but a large number of you pass Him by in unbelief. God grants you emotions of grace, but you either resist them or misinterpret them to the appropriation of false comfort. He gives you time for repentance, but you abuse it and move heedlessly on in sins and impenitence. Nor is this, as you wish to pre-

tend, done by reason of your weakness, because you are an imperfect human being. No, it is done by reason of your impenitence, by reason of an obdurate soul, which is unwilling to accept the grace of God unto repentance.

The unrighteous steward did not think of a day of reckoning before him. Like another "evil servant," mentioned in Mt. 24. 48, he probably thought, "My Lord tarrieth"; but while he was using his master's goods in an unjustifiable manner, the report of his faithlessness went abroad, and his master returned. When the steward least expected it, a message came from his master, summoning the steward to give an account. In like manner you also, O unconcerned soul, are wasting your Lord's goods and neglecting His grace. You may, indeed, cherish the thought that death will tarry, and that in the meantime you are without responsibility; but when you feel most secure, perchance, in the midst of a sinful life, a fearful message reaches you from God. A few words from the preacher come like arrows from the Lord and pierce your hardened heart, causing pain and anxiety. A few lines in a devotional book become to you like the message of the Lord to Ezekiel, "Written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." Sometimes the Holy Spirit makes use of some word which has lain inactive in your memory. This word becomes heavy and weighty, sinking down into the heart, and setting it in motion. These first workings of grace, this first anxiety for salvation, are results of the Holy Spirit's operation through the Word, just as the master in our Gospel "called the steward

and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee?" Even if outward occurrences contribute to this result, as in the case of the jailer in Philippi, it is nevertheless the Word which brings about true anxiety for the soul's salvation; and it is the redemption wrought by Jesus which is the foundation of it all. His "blood speaketh better than that of Abel." It calls to God even for the unconverted sinner, lest it be in vain for him, and in order that he may experience its power unto spiritual awakening. It calls and, as it were, admonishes the Spirit of grace to try His utmost to arouse the sinner to an earnest concern for a share in the propitiation which this blood has wrought before God.

1. This results from the upbraidings of conscience. "What is this that I hear of thee?" said the master in our text to his servant. Although everything is silent in the dormant heart of a sinner, still conscience occasionally raises its voice, upbraiding him, "Thus you are doing, that is how you live." Do you suppose that

"The Lord shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob consider?

He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall He not see?"

the evil that you are doing? Shall He not hear your sinful speech? Does not the great searcher of hearts know the abominations, which you are harboring in your mind? Indeed, it is He that inquires, "What is this that I hear of thee?" Is it right to live thus? Or why do you do this? Your oaths and curses — are they your songs of praise for the good which the

Lord has done even to you? Your intentional sins — are they the compensation for His goodness? The hostility, hardness, and indifference of your heart to your Saviour — are they your acknowledgement of His poverty, of His labor, of the hatred which He endured, of His anxiety, of His wounds, of His pain, of His death? May we not ask with Jeremiah, "Shall evil be recompensed for good?" Or in the words of our text, "What is this that I hear of thee?" Such thoughts are often considered to be merely self-assumed fancies, or at best a natural consequence of a manifestly wicked life, but they are not the works of nature; they are the works of grace. It is the Holy Spirit, who thus quickens the conscience and arouses the sinner to think. If this supreme custodian of the conscience did not awaken sinners, they would never awake themselves after having once fallen asleep.

2. The first workings of grace appear with unexpected reminders of death. "Thou canst be no longer steward," said the master in our text to his servant. He had to leave his stewardship. Such will be your lot in death. Then you must leave the world and its goods. The master in our text prepared his servant for the final dismissal. In like manner God reminds you that you must die, and He does this before death comes. He does not reveal when or how death will come, but He reminds you of the brevity of life and of mortality. You live on a long time without thinking of this, but all at once there comes a thought of death. Dear friends pass away, and you reflect to-day of what may happen you to-morrow. Accidents and dangers represent death as more probable and, as it

were, near at hand. A certain fear follows upon such presentiments of the approaching King of Terror. Nor are these thoughts of death merely vain fancies or natural fears, for they sometimes occur without any apparent reason. No, it is the Holy Spirit, who would "teach you to number your days, that you may get an heart of wisdom," that you may consider the aim of life and realize that you must soon "fly away."

3. The Holy Spirit awakens a sinner with secret dread of the day of reckoning, of judgment, and of punishment, "Render the account of thy stewardship." The servant had received his stewardship with the understanding that he should render account to his master. God gives freely, but He expects an account. In death it will appear how you have used the talent intrusted to you. If you wish to know what you have to hope or fear, just ask your conscience how your account stands. The judgment there found is written by the finger of God. It is the same judgment which will eventually be pronounced against you before the world, but God warns you while it may yet be altered. Believe me, the dread of eternity, which occasionally arises in your soul, the fear of hell, which often causes your heart to shudder—these are the workings of grace wrought by the Holy Spirit, who seeks to awaken you to an earnest anxiety for your eternal welfare and salvation.

Second Part.

*How a Great Number of People Act in an Entirely
Wrong Way, When Such Anxiety Arises
in Their Heart*

The unfaithful steward is represented as being in anxiety over his situation. He gave expression to his uneasiness of mind, as we recall from the introduction. He realized his sad predicament, but he was not heartily concerned about regaining his master's favor; no, he was merely concerned about how he might be supported during the rest of his life. So, likewise, the great majority of men, when they first become concerned about their soul's salvation, seek not for grace that they may be saved, but only how they may quiet their anxiety and get rid of their uneasiness of mind. They stop with these first emotions and do not advance farther on the way of repentance.

1. Some turn away from the first hardships that meet them on the way of repentance; they do this by reason of physical effeminacy and love of comfort. "I have not the strength to dig," said the unfaithful steward. He was accustomed to luxury and did not think that he could endure hard work. He loved comfort and had no desire to try any human hardships. He therefore said, "I have not the strength to dig." In like manner you act with reference to your salvation, O careless soul! When the Holy Spirit begins to arouse your conscience, your flesh and blood begin to wail. When the salt of Holy Scriptures smart in the wounds of sin, you say as some of the followers of Jesus once said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" It appears to you that the representations of Scripture are

altogether too severe. You make the claim that you have a delicate and sensitive heart, which might in this way easily be brought to pangs of conscience and despair, and so you allow the fear of such pangs of conscience and despair to frighten you, and you fear them to the extent that you continue securely on the way to hell. Indeed, I believe, and make the confident assertion, that this foolish fear of despair is like a public thoroughfare on which most people journey to eternal perdition. Oh, how utterly perverse to act thus! To begin and not finish! To be moved and yet remain unwilling to be converted! To see danger and not attempt to be saved, but rather grasp the wretched comfort of running into it with folded eyes! Even if it should cost you the most bitter tears of penitence, this surely cannot be worse than the condition found where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Even though you should in your awakening experience the most awful agony, this cannot rise to the heat that prevails in "the lake of fire, which burns with fire and brimstone."

2. Others turn back by reason of false modesty. They say, "To beg I am ashamed." You are ashamed of that which is not disgraceful. When the workings of grace become apparent, so that they attract the notice of the world, then you are ashamed to weep, and hence you endeavor to conceal and quench your emotions. The steward presumably thought that it would cost him too dearly to beg, after he had enjoyed plenty, even to the extent that he had been able to give to others. In like manner, it appears difficult for you who have looked upon yourself as a good Christian, and have been so considered by others, now to acknowledge that you are

a sinner under condemnation. You are ashamed to acknowledge that you need comfort, since you have comforted others. But you are a fool; you are ashamed of that which is the greatest honor, namely, that the great God is drawing near to your heart. Do you suppose that you will gain greater honor by being thus ashamed? No, by trying to escape from temporal scorn, you put yourself in danger of eternal shame. You are now ashamed before a crowd of blind and ignorant people, but some day you may with them stand ashamed before the Majesty of God, before the heavenly hosts, yes, before the whole world; for Jesus has said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in His glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels."

At first the steward had been at a loss to know what he should do, but when he was unwilling to do what he ought to have done, he chose perverse means out of his misery. When the first anxiety was over, he saw his way clear. He said, "I am resolved what to do." In consultation with his master's creditors he thereupon falsified their bonds. He doubtless altered his accounts also, so that bonds and accounts might agree. In this way, too, his own indebtedness appeared far less, the books as well as bonds showing smaller receipts. What is the significance of all your excuses? Are they not counterfeits, falsifying God's rights and your debts? You say, "I do the best I can," and that, you imagine, is all that God can expect. You feel sure that He can not demand more. But do you not know that God demands your whole heart? He says, "Give me, my son,

thine heart.” Does he get it? No, you give your heart to the world. It is only a few externals you leave for God, and you thus make a deceitful subtraction from the great requirement of God, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy might.”

Another expedient resorted to by sinners in their spiritual anxiety is that of looking to men for comfort. The unfaithful steward did this instead of going to his master and taking refuge in his mercy. In like manner, you do not exactly seek for grace and salvation, but to be comforted and to find peace. Of course, I do not mean to deny that an awakened sinner whose heart is filled with godly sorrow should have comfort. This he obtains from the God of all comfort, who has said, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.” No, but it is unreasonable to look for comfort before you are really sad at heart. Indeed, you wish to be comforted, in order that you may not be thus grieved, and that the first spark of unrest may be quenched before it develops into real anxiety. People are constantly crying for comfort, but they do not turn to God for it, but to men, even to men as blind and perverse as they themselves. These mighty comforters then sing to them the same lull-a-by, whereby they are accustomed to put their own conscience to sleep, and so “the blind lead the blind,” and both come nearer to the pit, the pit, whereof Isaiah says that “it is prepared of old, made deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood.” Is a sore healed merely because the pain has once subsided? No, be assured that it will return and that, if you never wish to be sorrowful unto repentance, you shall eventually,

without repentance, land where there is indescribable sorrow and, eternally, no comfort.

Third Part.

The Correct and Only Way to Be Taken, When Anxiety for Salvation Arises in the Soul.

Some earnestly anxious soul may now ask, "What shall I do that I may be saved?" To this I reply, You must, in a way, do precisely what the steward was unwilling to do, what he felt unable and ashamed to do, *dig and beg*.

1. You must dig, not in a bodily way, nor in such a spiritual way as if it were my counsel to a sorrowful soul that he should make every effort to work and thus try to help himself. Neither do I mean that you should try to dig yourself deeper and deeper into the knowledge of your sinful depravity, deeper than the Holy Spirit finds profitable and admits. Alas, no! There was digging enough for the purchasing of grace, when the earth was opened on Calvary, when the cross was planted on which the Son of God died as a curse for sinners. There was digging enough, when the thorns of His crown made deep pits in the head of the King of kings. There was digging enough, when the lashes of the scourging plowed deep furrows in His back. There was digging enough, when His side was pierced, after He had finished His labor for our sins and ended His toil for our transgressions. Consequently, there has been digging enough in the redemption of Jesus for the establishment of salvation. But your heart is like bed rock, unmoved by the love of Jesus, until it is rent by

the strokes of God's mighty Word and leaves room for the power of redemption unto purity and sanctification. Prior to this, it is like a smoothened road, where the seed cannot strike root, until the earth has been plowed. Hence, Jeremiah says, "Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns," and Paul speaks of the human heart and the work of grace thereon as "God's husbandry." It is, then, not your own work of which I speak but that of the Holy Spirit, who begins and perfects such good work. It is He, who must examine how deeply the digging and plowing must go to cause humility and contrition, and it is He who must bring it about.

The only work of digging allowed you is that commanded by the Saviour, "Search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they that bear witness of me." The Saviour here had in mind the faithful work, the untiring thoughtfulness, with which miners dig in the earth and examine into its crevices in search of precious metals and the treasures of the earth. Thus He would have you not grow weary, but search the Scriptures with increasing diligence and devout care, that you may there, in Christ, the rock of salvation, find the incorruptible treasures of heaven. This takes place, when you are rightly enlightened by the Spirit to understand, and by the mighty workings of God enabled to believe, the testimony of Christ, of which the Scriptures are full. "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."

2. In the second place, a soul that is concerned about

salvation may *beg*. Begging in the usual sense is by no means commendable, nor profitable for the body or the soul, but in spiritual trials begging is the only way of receiving grace and salvation. When a person is destitute and cannot earn anything for his livelihood, he takes to begging. So too, when you are poor in spirit, when you find that there is not the slightest good in you, nothing that can meet the approval of the holy and righteous God, when you realize that you cannot purchase or merit anything that will help you to obtain God's grace and the inheritance of His kingdom, then the only means remaining is to ask for grace and to beg for mercy. You must, in the first place, come as a beggar to receive grace, but you must not on your way for spiritual alms proceed in your rags. You cannot conceal your wretchedness and nakedness before the omniscient God, nor even before men, for your filth is nevertheless apparent. The only thing you may bring with you is a staff wherewith to support your fatigued soul and, like beggars, to defend yourself and chase the dogs away. I mean a bold hope in God's mercy and grace for the sake of the merits of His only begotten Son. This is the staff on which you must lean when you approach the mercy-seat. By it you are to drive away the dogs who come against you with chains of darkness, the impure spirits who are wont to attack the souls that seek for mercy, to tempt and trouble them with disheartening doubts. Come, then, though vile, approach the door of grace with timid boldness, knock with heartfelt sighing, and beg earnestly even for a crumb of the bread of grace in Jesus' name. If you find no immediate response, if the door remains shut

for a little while, if everything is quiet and it seems as though the Lord had not heard your rapping nor heeded your prayer, you must still not depart in disheartening impatience, but wait quietly for the fulfillment of the promise, "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Only continue, with earnest perseverance, to sigh and pray for forgiveness, for the sake of the redemption of Jesus, and for the Father's grace by reason of the merits of His Son, and you shall eventually be admitted into the kingdom of grace, yea, be received, not as a faithless servant, but as a beloved child and a dear friend. Then shall the Lord blot out your guilt with the blood of Jesus and compensate for your faults and sins with His perfect righteousness. He shall also endow you with wisdom and power and a mind to understand and obey the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Application.

It is remarkable that there is no one who has not at some time been noticeably moved by the Word of God. This is the first workings of grace by which the Holy Spirit seeks to awaken you to anxiety for salvation. It may seem hard for flesh and blood, but do not turn away from this first step on the way of life, even though you fear still greater and more formidable difficulties. If you willingly submit to the workings of the Holy Spirit, heed His reminders, and follow His guidance; if you carefully use the grace He grants you, the first anxiety will become easier than you had expected.

O ye anxious sinners, do not feel ashamed of this,

nor quench the anxiety of your soul. Be assured that although the world despises and hates you at times, it nevertheless harbors an inward feeling of respect for an upright form of Christianity. There will also come a time when the worldly minded will feel constrained to wish that they were like you, saying, with Balaam,

“Let me die the death of the righteous,
And my last end be like his!”

Let not your natural egotism deceive you to make excuses and to minimize your guilt before God. Is it not easier to have it all blotted out at once and remitted for the sake of the payment made by Jesus than to make a vain attempt at falsifying your bonds or, with your own righteousness, to pay the last farthing of an infinite debt? Beware of the false comforts of men. They help you merely “from the ashes into the fire.”

You, my friends, who have passed through the first anxiety of repentance and have found comfort and peace in your Saviour through faith in Him, do not let the love of worldly comfort entice you away from the cross. “If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross, and follow me.” Consider how your Saviour, in order to save you from eternal woe, gave up the joy of heaven and the comfort of the earth to the extent that He could say, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Do not feel ashamed of Him and His gospel, for He was not ashamed of your wretchedness. He took it upon Himself and became, in your stead, “despised and rejected of men.” Nor is He in His exaltation and glory ashamed of the wretchedness

and infirmity of His children. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Only continue to sink your hearts by faith into His wounds, into the boundless knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Press forward to a nearer and more intimate, loving, and childlike confidence in Him. Do this by daily using His Word aright, begging for His grace and mercy. He will then eventually in a blessed death take you away from all manner of anxiety and grant you the salvation which He has purchased for you.

Lord Jesus! Thou hast been anxious and grieved for our sins. Grant that Thy power, thus obtained, may work in the hearts of sinners an earnest anxiety for the salvation which Thou hast so dearly purchased. Mercifully do this for the sake of Thine anxiety during thirty years, for the sake of Thine indescribable anguish and Thine eternal pain. Amen, Lord Jesus, amen.

Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity

In the Name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.

This is the assurance which Jesus, the Prince of Life, has given to us mortals, (John 5. 24). After the Creator gave us being, the Father sent His Son into the world "that the world should be saved through Him." Life is the chief privilege of man, and it is the happiest hope of the believer that this life will endure forever. He knows and believes that the Son of God is sent to work this very thing, that through Him we might live eternally happy, in eternal glory and joy. This was the chief mission of Jesus, the chief subject of His discourses, in our text and elsewhere, and it should be the chief object of your careful attention, O man, if you would have a sure foundation for your hope of entering into the joy of eternal life. God has laid no other foundation than the redemption wrought by His Son, neither has He given any other means of attaining it

than that set forth in the solemn words of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you" etc.

When this means is rightly used, it undoubtedly brings about and works in us true faith in God. This faith is described as a relying on God, especially in view of His infinite mercy in sending His Son in the fashion of a servant to fulfil our duties and to suffer the penalties for our sins. Jesus says concerning one who has such a faith that he has eternal life, and that the believer has received eternal life by passing from death to life. Here a foundation is laid for a blessed death, indeed, to the extent that the essential transformation which takes place in the death of a believer took place before, even in the very moment when, through faith in Jesus, he passed "from dead works to serve the living God." He already possesses the salvation which he expects to enjoy in a greater measure and undisturbedly after death. Jesus represents that as a consequence of this condition the believer will not enter into judgment, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment." The Master does not hereby annul the teaching of His apostle Paul, that "we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." As the supreme judge of the world, Jesus merely exempts every believing soul from the judgment of condemnation, which has already been pronounced in the Word against those who continue in unbelief and in an unchanged mind, without the blessed fellowship that is in Jesus. Jesus says that the believer is so much the more safe from such condemnation, as he already possesses the salvation which shall, in the

day of judgment, be pronounced upon him by grace. We do not, however, wish to proceed further in the consideration of this matter, until we have approached the seat of mercy and asked for the requisite divine help. "Our Father" etc.

Proposition.

THE BLESSED PASSING FROM DEATH TO LIFE

1. The foundation is laid and the beginning is made, when one passes from spiritual death to spiritual life.
2. The completion is made in the passing from bodily death to the full enjoyment of the glory and joy of eternal life.

First Part.

We here note that the foundation of a blessed passing from death to life is laid, and the beginning thereof made, in the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life.

All men who by intentional wickedness are separated from God are in the Scriptures called dead, for their spiritual condition resembles the bodily condition of one that is dead. In the hour of death one's vision becomes darkened so that one cannot see even at bright midday; similarly a person who is separated from God is overwhelmed with blindness in spiritual matters so that he cannot, even in the clearest light of God's Word, judge of the things that pertain to his peace. In Eph. 4. 18, Paul describes those whom in chapter 2. 1 he calls spiritually dead, saying that their "understanding is

darkened," and that they are "alienated from the life of God," because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart. Secure sinners are as void of feeling and emotion as the dead youth in our text on his bier, quite as unconcerned and careless about their future lot throughout the long and fearful eternity. As the youth was being borne out of the city where he had lived, nearer and nearer to his grave, so too, he who is dead in trespasses and sins is by his sins being led and brought farther and farther from God, nearer and nearer to the pit, to "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

If Jesus had not met the funeral procession at Nain, the dead would have remained dead, and unless He sought and found a sinner where he goes on the paths of death, the sinner would never be awakened from his stupor. But Jesus approaches, He is moved with compassion, and in the Word He grasps the sinner's heart with His hand of grace. The threats and convictions of the law fill the sinner with anxiety concerning his condition and make him fearful of the end of his perverted life, but now he stops and rushes no longer heedlessly on into ungovernable sins.

The sorrow aroused by the law over the misery into which the sinner has plunged himself is increased when flooded by the light of the gospel, which illuminates the law and reminds the sinner of the blessings of God, and of the foolishness and ingratitude with which these have been used or abused. When the sinner thus in the gospel learns to understand what a merciful, gracious, and loving God he has offended and hated, then his sorrow becomes that of God's mind, approaching the char-

acter that God would have it to be. The sinner then departs from his former unrighteousness. He loathes it and, when he realizes his own weakness, he sighs for help out of the deep affliction into which he finds himself plunged. While thus calling upon the Lord, the sinner obtains a clearer insight into the gospel and learns that the help he so urgently needs is to be found in Christ. The Father draws the sinner's mind to consider the testimony which the prophets bear of Christ, and the Holy Spirit praises Jesus as great and indispensable for a sinner's salvation.

When such grace is not "turned into lasciviousness," nor is obstinately resisted, it confers a spark of courage, so that the sinner dares to hope in the mighty and merciful Saviour. God promises unconditionally, without limitation, to forgive those who have such a faith as He promises to confer. He thus puts courage into the heart of the sinner and enables him to apply the promise to himself. While this takes place in his heart, the Spirit of prayer arouses him to "name the name of the Lord" and by faith to "press on and apprehend Christ." The soul battles against doubt and unbelief and is finally victorious, being able to "know in whom he has believed," namely, the very Son of God, who has made payment for sins and for whose sake they are forgiven, according to the promises of God.

As the dead youth became bodily alive, when Jesus said to him, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise," so the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life takes place when a person hears and obeys the summoning voice of Jesus in the word, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon

thee." Then the "Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings," for God fulfills the promises in which the soul has trusted. God grants the believer a share in the merits of the Mediator on whom he relies, and "the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience from dead works." God forgives our sins for the sake of the bloody atonement of Jesus and, with the comfort of the Holy Spirit, He takes away the fear of death with which our conscience had been grievously troubled. Jesus, who is Life itself, then unites with that soul; but where Life dwells, there can be no death. The believer can say with Paul, "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." By means of such union with Christ a person becomes united with the Holy Trinity and with other believers, even as Jesus prayed, "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me." What no law can accomplish, namely, to make the heart alive with love to God and with pleasure in His commandments, this the Holy Spirit, granted to the believer, performs, pouring God's love into such an heart. A person experiencing this love as well as love for all men, and especially for all that believe, can make the certain inference which John made, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren."

Such a passing from spiritual death is the beginning and basis of a person's passing from temporal death into eternal life. In general the teaching of Jesus tends

to establish, "That whosoever believeth shall be saved," but more especially Jesus derives from the true faith and from eternal life the doctrine that a blessed passing over takes place at the moment of bodily death. At the grave of Lazarus Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." In the new birth the beginning is made of everything that pertains to the privileges, glory, and blessedness of eternal life. The sinful depravity of a believer could not be entirely eradicated in death, unless it had been subdued and had lost its power when the new heart was created in him. The glory which Paul says is to be revealed in a child of God after death is, according to David, already possessed by the true believers, indeed has been ever since they were adopted to be sons and daughters of God. It is concerning the congregation of believers that David sings,

"The king's daughter within is all glorious;
Her clothing is inwrought with gold."

It is from this childhood by faith that Paul derives the right to inherit the glory of eternal life. He says, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." God's presence, which constitutes the eternal glory of the blessed, began when the Father and the Son came and took their abode with them, when they began to "love Jesus and to keep his word." Although they have here walked in an imperfect knowledge of faith, they have nevertheless enjoyed "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," by faith derived from the Word, and this has been a beginning

and a preparation for the perfect knowledge in the higher life. Comparing these different degrees of knowledge, Paul calls the former the rudiments of learning appertaining to children, which precedes the mature, manly knowledge to be obtained when we shall gloriously see God in the land of the living.

Second Part.

A Blessed Passing from Bodily Death to Eternal Life.

When the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life has taken place, then, if we are still in that condition, the passing to eternal life takes place whenever bodily death overtakes us. If Christ is our life, we cannot lose anything when we die. Death separates our soul from the body, but it cannot separate us from Christ. The believer passes out from this life through death and enters immediately "into the joy of the Lord." A person justified is, then, in no danger of suffering any loss in death. He is prepared to die, and his death will be a blessed one, whenever the Lord shall call him.

God has the control over life and death, but He does not call a person away as soon as he is prepared for a blessed death. There are other matters for which God would use us, before He permits death to come. God wants to use us in His service wherever He is pleased to place us. He wants to try us in the faith, increase our love, and teach us to deny our willfulness and to "bear the cross after Jesus."

When God considers a person mature and approved, this person may go and receive his crown. This is the end which James has in view for the life of a person

converted, "When he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life." When a pardoned sinner has, as "God's husbandry," like the seed in the earth, endured many changes of refreshing grace and of the drought of temptation until he is mature; "When the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle," and brings home a ripe sheaf of wheat in due time. This time — God's time — does not always seem to us to be the due time. The widow of Nain could assuredly not feel that her son was called away in due season, unless her mind was duly enlightened. Some ripen rapidly, they speedily run their course and finish it, attaining their goal in a short time, even before they have left the years of youth.

The passing away takes place either violently and by unusual accidents, or usually by sickness, the body becoming in the guidance of God unfit to longer harbor the soul. The eyes no longer see the light. The ears no longer hear the sobs of their friends and relatives. The senses cease to function, and the soul departs from its workhouse. During this transformation there often appears to be much suffering. Indeed, there is some pain in connection with the separation of the soul from the body; but inasmuch as Jesus "has tasted death for every man" and swallowed up its bitterness, He fulfills upon every believer the promise He has given, "If a man keep my word, he shall never taste death." The comfort of the Holy Spirit robs death of its bitterness, and the peace of God which the believer perceives is a shield against the pains of death.

The soul passes out from the body and from all the misery to which it has been subjected while dwelling

there, and it becomes glorified and is escorted by angels to heaven, where joy immediately begins. The evil desires are quenched and all evil thoughts disappear. With shame and indignation Satan sees the soul escape forever from his assaults. The soul leaves the turmoil of the world by which it has been surrounded. The glory of God even previously dwelling in the soul evolves and exalts the soul to a nobility which surpasses everything that "has entered into the heart of man." The soul now tastes the sweetness of God's love, of which it has previously tasted merely a few drops, and it is filled with an indescribable comfort and joy. The holy angels who have ministered to it during the pilgrimage of grace, though in an invisible manner, now accompany it on its ascension to heaven, being both companions and guides. Upon entering heaven, the soul is greeted by the friends which it had acquired by its stewardship and distribution of earthly goods among fellow-believers on the earth. It finds a room in the Father's house, the place provided in the kingdom of His Son. Here it joins the hosts of thousands upon thousands surrounding the throne, praising God and the Lamb for the mercy received during life in the realms of time, and for the salvation now granted and eternally enjoyed.

Finally, "at the end of the days," even the body shall arise glorified from the earth and stand before the judgment seat of Christ, thence, united with the soul, to enter into the kingdom of heaven and to enjoy a glory augmented by the reunion of the body and the soul. As Jesus raised up the widow's son, so He shall also in the last day raise up those who have believed on Him. Then shall the body ascend from the earth, not

with the corruptible elements of which it was composed in life, nor with the lowly character in which it was laid in the grave, but with incorruptible glory and power. Even as the whole man has been redeemed by Christ and the whole man has been the temple of God, so the whole man, body and soul, may then enter into eternal life. We may then with glorified eyes, face to face, behold Him whom we have believed and loved, though we did not see Him. Our body may then in a worthy manner take part in the gladness of the soul and "the pleasures for evermore in the right hand of God." The tongue shall then with unutterable words praise Jesus, who shall have "fashioned anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory," and "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

I herewith close the sermon of a probationer, delivered at my request and with the approval of my superiors. This worthy congregation has again been given an opportunity to prove the measure of grace given to me. I have presented a blessed translation from death to life. I have first shown that the beginning and foundation of this passing from death to life are made in the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life. I have next shown that the completion takes place in the passing from temporal death to a full enjoyment of the glory and joy of eternal life.

Application.

We are all strangers, travelers, and pilgrims. We know that we must depart from this life, and there surely is no one who does not in the hour of death wish

for a blessed passing into eternal life. God is my witness, how heartily I wish all of you this good fortune; but you must search the Scriptures and find out whether you have experienced the translation first described, if you have gone out of the camp, away from the service of sin and Satan, if you have passed over to the camp of Jesus and borne His reproach, to be his possession, to live according to His commandments, and not after your own good pleasure nor according to the doctrines of men. If this has not taken place, you are in the greatest danger, for if bodily death overtakes you in this condition, you will pass from spiritual to eternal death. If you perceive that this is your condition, and if you nevertheless find that you can remain unconcerned in view of your misery, alas, pray God to awaken you from your spiritual stupor. He will certainly do this, if you use His Word diligently.

If you have been enlightened by the law to know your wretchedness, then you may be assured that the beginning toward a passing from spiritual death consists in this very thing, that you feel as though you were spiritually dead, and that the completion is effected when the Holy Spirit has persuaded you to believe that your sins, according to God's promises, are forgiven. You must then willingly abandon your own efforts, your own works and deeds, and put your trust in the merits and suffering of Jesus in your behalf.

If and when you have done this, you may in the midst of adversities comfort yourself with the thought in which the children of the world (though without foundation) are wont to take comfort, namely that death is nothing but a transition. Then, my brethren, we may

look out over the fields which are yet inshrouded with darkness toward a better life, glimpses of which are revealed in the Word, and we may in this way be sustained in a longing for a blessed passing from death to life. Amen.

St. Michael's Day

Introduction.

*For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way,
that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it.*

Hear this, O man, you who are hoping and longing for eternal life. Your Saviour, who has opened the way, says that you cannot enter without opposition and, hence, that there are few who attain the goal. "For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way," etc. Mt. 7. 14.

Conversion is like a gate to the straitened way of godliness. Conversion is the change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit by means of the Word of God, leading to a hearty confidence in the redemption of the Son of God, to the forgiveness of sins and strength to lead the new life determined upon. It is only by means of such a change that a Christian life can begin. The gate of repentance is the entrance to the way of life.

This gate is narrow. Man must enter there alone. You cannot bring your sins with you, O man, you must lay them away. Human friendship cannot be retained, for you must bear the reproach of Jesus. You cannot expect worldly enjoyments, for you must take up the cross of your Saviour. "Narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life."

The straitened way of godliness follows upon the narrow gate of repentance. If you have been converted and

have come to the faith and have thus received the forgiveness of sins, then you must more and more lay off the remaining sinful desires for the manifestations of which you have been forgiven. Upon conversion follows sonship, and with this childlike obedience must be associated.

But straitened is the way that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it. The evil desires cannot be conquered without battle, and few are they that enter upon this warfare, few are they that "run with patience the race that is set before them." No one can do the will of God without interference, and few are they who pass beyond the first stumblingblocks. Few are rightly converted, and few are they that endure unto the end. "For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it."

The gate of repentance is narrow, but not closed. Let us, therefore, pray that some of you may enter. The way of godliness is straitened, but not inaccessible. Let each and every one pray that he may be one of the few that find it. For the sake of Jesus, who has opened this way, let us pray for this very thing in His prayer, wherein the way is marked out. "Our father" etc.

Proposition.

THE ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. The entrance to the way of godliness by means of the narrow gate of repentance.
2. The entrance into the kingdom of heaven by means of the straitened way of godliness.

First Part.

The early disciples took it for granted that they should enter the kingdom of heaven. They merely asked Jesus who would be greatest therein. Jesus, however, declared that they would not enter at all, unless they were first converted and had thus become like little children.

Conversion, then, takes its beginning in such a way that a person who has previously in his state of security taken for granted that he would enter into the kingdom of heaven, becomes convinced that a true conversion must first take place.

Conversion is an entirely foreign matter to a spiritually unconcerned person, for, though such a person may have heard of it in sermons or read about it in devotional books, he has not taken the matter seriously, nor considered that he himself needs to be converted. Either he does not think that he must experience such a change, or he imagines that it has already taken place, so he is of the opinion that the only thing which he must yet do to enter the kingdom of heaven is to pass away from this world by death.

Conversion takes its beginning in a person when he becomes convinced by the Word of God that conversion is necessary for salvation, and that he himself is not converted. When a person has been moved by the sweetness of the first workings of grace to use the Word of God diligently, he learns how conversion takes place and what a man's condition is after he has been converted. In the light of the spiritual knowledge thus acquired under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he realizes that

he is as yet not converted, for his condition is not such as the Word of God attributes to those that are rightly converted. "Through the law cometh the knowledge of sin." God's commands and the law then reveal to his conscience that he is still harboring sins which it is not possible for a truly converted man to cherish.

Conversion makes progress when a person, by the threats of God's law, with fear perceives and with pain feels that he is under the wrath and condemnation of God, and when he is thereby impelled to seek salvation for his soul. Even as a person cannot by his own natural reason comprehend that he has offended God and merited eternal condemnation, so neither can he by his own strength fear the wrath of God and grieve over his lost condition. This grief, which is called a grief after God's mind, is the work of God. The Spirit of God, who has wrought it by the Word, also urges a person more and more into the Word, so that he uses it, not only by reason of its delightful taste, but because it is entirely indispensable as a means unto the salvation of his soul. To use this means of conversion with watchfulness and prayer is, indeed, the only requirement which our Saviour has laid in the gospel for those who are to be converted and thereby enter into the kingdom of heaven. While a person uses the Word to be converted, his conversion is perfected when he rightly believes on Jesus.

The law is a tutor impelling a sinner to seek for salvation. It is a tutor unto Christ. When salvation is offered in Christ the Saviour, the soul is therefore found prepared to receive, and is concerned about receiving, the salvation offered in the gospel. God's gracious

promises, offering grace and forgiveness, also enable the awakened soul to appropriate the promises of grace and the assurances of justification and salvation which God has given in the Word for Jesus' sake. These enable the frightened heart to trust in the merits of Christ the Saviour and to be hopeful of obtaining sonship and pardon. This childlike confidence of a man in God is the first part of what the Saviour calls to "become like children." The apostle Peter also says, "Set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as children of obedience."

This faith is the entrance to the straitened way of godliness and is at the same time an entrance to the kingdom of heaven. Faith embraces Christ and is an entering into the kingdom. So the Scriptures teach everywhere. They promise eternal life through faith in Jesus. The true faith is an entering into the kingdom, because it is an entering upon the way of godliness and sanctified life. Peter expresses this immediately after the words just quoted. Having admonished unto faith, he also admonishes unto a Christian life, "Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance: but like as he which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." True faith is the entering upon the way of godliness, for it gives both incentive and power unto a Christian life. When a person has "known and believed the love which God hath to us, he abideth in love." Faith manifests itself in love, even as the apostle John continues, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not

grievous. For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." It is from Jesus that faith obtains strength to lead a holy life, as the Lord said to Paul, "The Gentiles receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified *by faith in me.*" We shall speak more especially about the entering into the kingdom by way of the straitened way of godliness when we now come to the second part of our discourse.

Second Part.

If a converted person is to make progress along the way of godliness, he must be humble, "poor in spirit," or, as the Saviour elsewhere expresses it, he must humble himself like a child. As the ambition for honor is one of the chief results of our corruption by sin, it is very important for a Christian to work against an undue love of self. The Spirit of the Lord has laid a foundation for this in the new birth by then making us poor in spirit. God promotes Christian humility by letting us in temptations and suffering feel our wretchedness and infirmity, and it behooves us to further this purpose of God with watchfulness and prayer, as Peter admonishes, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due season."

Christian love is the first and chief fruit of faith; it is also an essential and necessary step on the straitened way of godliness. Christian love should, says our Saviour in the gospel, be shown even to children, who are otherwise generally considered as of less consequence. The Saviour describes this love as primarily exercised

in His name, for His sake, because a person is redeemed by Jesus, even though he does not, like the little children, believe on Him, and has not become a child of God — as the little children have become — under the care of the holy angels. A converted person should show love to the little children and to other believers, not alone by giving some insignificant alms, but also, where this is necessary and possible, by complete care for the helpless neighbor. Jesus speaks in the gospel of receiving the little ones that believe on Him, that is to assume the manifold duties and the hidden care given by a real father. The apostle Paul also admonishes the Christians to show such love, “As we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith.”

If a converted person is to be able to continue on the straitened way of godliness, he must with earnest determination separate himself from everything that is detrimental to his progress. This is what the Saviour means when He admonishes those who would enter into eternal life to sever from their body such members as tend to hinder their spiritual advancement, members that “cause thee to stumble.” Even if it were something as innocent in itself as the pleasures of vision, if you observe that it leads you into temptation, you must make haste to relinquish it. If some privilege be as useful to a person as his hand, he must forsake it, if he finds that it becomes a snare for the soul. Yes, if some of his earthly goods were as indispensable as his foot, he must rather suffer the greatest temporal want than to have everything in abundance and lack the one thing needful, to possess all privileges in time and lose everything in

eternity, first to enjoy all the pleasures of life and then to be consumed by the anguish of eternal death, to have two eyes, two hands, two feet, and be cast into eternal fire. The Saviour has declared this to be needful for every one that would follow Him on the way to eternal life, saying, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

It is by this way of godliness that we enter into the heavenly kingdom. Although no man will be saved by life and works, neither will any one be saved without these, that is, without having entered upon the way of a godly life, without doing good works. The Saviour Himself asserts this, saying, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." It is by faith in Jesus that a converted person may enter into the heavenly kingdom, if he remains in this faith to the end; but it is by its exercise in godliness that faith endures. Spiritual poverty makes the riches of divine grace all the more indispensable for the faithful soul. Faith finds exercise in Christian love, and the hindrances to growth in faith are removed by Christian self-denials.

Application.

Learn of this, you that lead a manifestly sinful life, that a godless life is no way to the kingdom of heaven; it is the broad way that leads to destruction. When you do what others consider sinful and you yourselves know to be sin, then you belong to those whom the Word of God calls ungodly, even though you do not wish to bear that name. Know, then, I tell you again, that you are

not walking on the straitened way of godliness, but on the broad way that leads to destruction. It does you no good to hope for salvation, for your hope shall perish. It is vain to dream of heaven, for if you continue in this condition, you shall certainly come whither you had not imagined.

Some of you may lead an honorable life, though you are not converted; but you must know that mere honesty is not Christianity. There is no other entrance to the way of godliness than by the narrow gate of repentance. To avoid things punishable among men — this is not the fear of the Lord; it is merely the fear of men. Be convinced by the Word of God that all human righteousness is manifest ungodliness before God, in order that you, thus convinced, may be driven to Jesus and by Him find an open way to eternal life, for He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

Some of you are moved by the Word of God. You have come to the narrow gate, but you have not thereby passed through it, for emotions are not conversion. They are, however, wrought by the Spirit of God. Their aim is that you may be brought to use the Word of God. As this means of salvation has already brought you near the kingdom of God, enabling you to taste its power, so this same Word of God will also bring you to a true conversion. It is not to stop with a mere taste of the sweetness of God’s grace, but you will come to possess it. Not only will the hope of salvation delight your heart, but the assurance of childhood will gladden your soul.

You, who are awakened to anxiety for your soul’s salvation, you are standing in the very gate of conversion. Press earnestly on, that you may pass through the gate.

On the other side you will find the mercy seat of Jesus, where pardon is awaiting you, if you but receive it, and deliverance from your sins, if you but seek it by prayer in Jesus' name. Continue to use the Word, and this will bring you to the Saviour and place you on the way that leads to eternal life. Then you are protected against eternal death, which you fear. If you should be called from this world after such a change has taken place in you, there can be no danger of your coming to destruction, for no man comes to destruction, unless he walks the way that leads thither. You are not on that way if you are earnestly concerned about your salvation; you are on the way to eternal salvation. If you continue along this way, you will assuredly enter into the heavenly kingdom, whither this way leads.

This continuing must be your chief concernment, if you are assured that you have entered upon the straitened way of life, for it appears to you that you have only advanced a few steps on that way. Even this, that you feel as though you were far behind, means progress, if you but press on to advance rightly. Jesus is the way. Hence, the clearer your knowledge of Him becomes in the light of the Word, the farther you have advanced. The more you endeavor to assist and serve your fellow men for Jesus' sake, the more has your love increased. The more faithfulness you show in forsaking everything that leads from the way of salvation, the more has your spiritual strength grown. In order that you may remain on this way, whither the Lord has brought you, it is very important that you use the Word of God diligently, and that you conscientiously follow its directions. Then will the Lord, in the light of the Word,

show you the right way and with its power bring you onward. Holy Communion will give you refreshing nourishment on your spiritual journey, and Jesus Himself will follow you on the way: and so you are to enter into eternal life by means of the straitened way of godliness, even as you have entered upon His way by means of the narrow gate of repentance. Amen.

Third Sunday After Epiphany

In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am all full of festering sores, Come lay Thy hand upon me; I am adrift far from the shores, Let Thy grace never fail me. I am so weak, have pity, Lord, An erring sheep Thy care afford. Thy grace alone I'm pleading.

Pray thus, thou penitent sinner who art aware of thy soul's infirmity and longest for spiritual health. Pray to Jesus, the right physician of souls, in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction.

"Wouldest thou be made whole?" This strange question was put by the Lord to a man who lay bodily sick. To-day I wish to direct the same question to all who are spiritually sick, *"Wouldest thou be made whole?"*

There was in Jerusalem a pool, called Bethesda, into which at certain seasons an angel descended and troubled the water. The first invalid to descend into the water after it had been troubled was healed. There was among others a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years, lying in one of the porches erected for the sick. He had waited long but in vain for the healing bath. He had no one to help him into the water and

was always preceded by some one who was a little stronger or who had a helper. Jesus saw him and learned that he had lain there for a long time, and He said to the man, "Wouldest thou be made whole?"

It may appear superfluous for Jesus to ask this question, since it was evident that the invalid wished to be made whole, but Jesus wished to show, first, that while the sick man could not help himself, his consent was nevertheless necessary; secondly, that when he wished to be made well, Jesus had the requisite power and willingness to heal him.

Man's spiritual condition resembles that of one bodily sick. Pains, unconsciousness, fever, infirmity, yes, even death follows upon spiritual, as well as upon bodily, diseases. The Holy Scriptures therefore represent the rising up from our sinful depravity as being like a healing from some malady. Our Gospel text speaks of two, who were bodily sick and whom Jesus healed. It is not, then, improper, if we take occasion to speak of spiritual healing from a disease with which our souls are all affected, a disease which eventually leads to eternal destruction, if it is not healed in time.

Jesus has procured so certain a remedy that it never fails, if rightly used. He has also opened a way to this remedy, so that every man can be healed. Jesus has made so perfect a payment for all our sins and purchased grace unto the rising up of the soul from sinful depravity that any one who rightly seeks for atonement and appropriates the grace in Christ never can remain lying in the wretchedness of his sins. The way lies open in repentance and faith, and the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments, are available. It is by

these that the Holy Spirit, without our assistance, enables us to gain the health and life which Jesus has purchased for our sick, dead souls.

On behalf of Jesus I must now ask you the same question that He put to the sick man at Bethesda, "Wouldest thou be made whole?" Though your consent is necessary for the healing of your soul, you have nothing to contribute. If you wish to be healed spiritually, you shall know that Jesus is willing to heal you. He is also able; He lacks no power, for He is God. He has healed many thousands quite as wretched and corrupted as you. Fall down before Him as did the leper and ask for the healing of your soul, saying, "Our Father" etc.

Text: Mt. 8. 1-13.

Proposition

A GLORIOUS COMFORT FOR PENITENT SINNERS

1. Penitent sinners to whom it is a comfort that Jesus will make them whole.
2. The glorious comfort for such penitent sinners, that Jesus will make them whole.

Prayer.

O Jesus Christ! Thou art the healing and life of our souls. Concerning Thee it is written that, on one occasion when Thou wast teaching much people, the power of the Lord was with Thee to heal. Let Thy Word now be active to the making of this congregation whole by means of the health which Thou hast purchased for us with Thy blood. Amen.

First Part.

*To Whom It Is a Comfort That Jesus Will Make
Them Whole.*

Evidently there can be no comfort to be made well except to those who grieve because they are sick. No one rejoices in the hope of regaining his health, unless he knows that he has lost it and is painfully aware of this loss.

No man is by nature whole. Every one is corrupted by the infection of sin. Spiritually he resembles the leper in our Gospel. Leprosy was a disease which spread sores all over the body, causing pain and an obnoxious odor. Human depravity is by Isaiah described in terms apparently borrowed from this disease, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and festering sores." The whole head is sick. The entire reason of man is blinded; the functions and organs of the intellect are in the greatest disorder and confusion, so that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and he cannot know them." The whole heart is faint. The human will is faint with infirmity, slothfulness, and indifference as far as God and the kingdom of grace are concerned. Indeed, "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God." Our natural mind neither is, nor can be, "subject to the law of God." Human nature is full of sin, corruption, and wretchedness. From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there are festering sores or manifest sins, also secret sins, "wounds and bruises" containing cankerous poison.

No man knows his spiritual infirmity by his own reason. In his natural condition man is like one sick, not only by reason of his suffering, but also because he is so seriously affected that he loses consciousness of his pains. Immediately after a person has broken his baptismal covenant, he has disturbing reminders of his backsliding, and an anxious feeling of regret overtakes him when he recalls the blessings he once enjoyed. He soon casts away his anxiety, however, stifles his apprehensions with new sin, and eventually becomes quite callous and secure. Even if there are occasional attacks of the former anxiety, they are soon forgotten, and the sinner may in the meantime boast of having a good conscience, not doubting his salvation.

It is the Word of God that informs a person of his spiritual disease. This is the significance of the word by Jeremiah, "Is not my word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It breaks a man's stony heart and causes a smarting sensation of sorrow, as though the heart were crushed. The spiritual condition then resembles the physical condition of the centurion's servant of whom we read, "My servant lieth in the house sick, grievously tormented." When the law "pierces to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow," then the sins revealed thoroughly frighten the soul with fear of eternal condemnation, which the awakened soul at last realizes that he has merited. The law demands love to God with all one's heart, but now it becomes apparent in the light of God's Word that one harbors evil desires. In short, when God begins to heal the soul, its depravity becomes quite apparent.

A person then also becomes aware of his inability to

help himself. His soul resembles the servant in our Gospel, who was "sick of the palsy," and quite unable to help himself out of his tribulations. The awakened sinner is indeed willing to attempt to help himself, but his dismal failures and a greater enlightenment finally convince him that, in the words of the apostle Paul, "We are not sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." A sinner so awakened fears the wrath of God and finds himself unable to appease the Lord. He feels the loathsome violence of the passions and many a time with heartfelt sorrow and humiliation he experiences his inability to quench and, still less, to uproot them.

Second Part.

It Is a Comfort for Such Souls That Jesus Is Willing to Make Them Whole.

Indeed, a person so awakened already has the comfort that Jesus can make a wretched man whole. It is this comfort which secretly sustains a penitent soul and keeps it from despair. For where would otherwise be our hope? But, now hallelujah! Jesus can do it; let Him be eternally praised for it. He can do it, for He has been able to fulfill the law, endure the penalty of our sins, bring the devil to nought, take away sins, appease the wrath of God, and make Himself alive again. Nothing is beyond His power. "All authority," He says, "hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." Jesus can heal a wretched soul. Lo, here there are prospects, there is hope of obtaining health by His stripes, and life by His death.

This comfort is given even in the state of awakening.

The leper expressed his conviction that Jesus was able to cure him, saying, "Thou canst make me whole." The centurion had such lofty conceptions of the Saviour's power that he believed Jesus could heal the palsied servant even at a distance by a mere word. He explained his faith with a parable referring to himself. Though he was under authority, he nevertheless had power to accomplish several things by means of his servant and his soldiers, and so he was all the more sure that Jesus who is above all, having no superiors, could do everything. So also an awakened sinner is entirely convinced that Jesus can heal a diseased soul. This conviction of Jesus' power to help is a result of the first enlightenment by the gospel. When a person has read the Word of God, heard and read it in its entire connection, then he has acquainted himself with the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as with the law. The latter has indeed, according to God's order of grace, first enlightened the sinner to know himself and his wretchedness, but thereupon the Holy Spirit makes the Gospel vital to the heart and enables the sinner to know Jesus Christ and the great value of His redemption. The penitent sinner then understands and believes that since he is but a mere man while Jesus is God, therefore the payment effected by Jesus is greater than the sinner's guilt, His reparation greater than the sinner's fall, the grace purchased greater than the wrath merited, the salvation obtained far surpassing the wretchedness in which the sinner feels himself plunged. He therefore confidently believes that Jesus can forgive all his sins, raise him up out of perdition, and grant him grace unto salvation. Still there is an obscure uncertainty whether Jesus is also

willing. "If thou wilt," said the leper. Jesus was therefore anxious to assure him as well as the centurion of His willingness and readiness to help; He said, "I will; be thou made clean;" "I will come and heal him."

It is very certain that Jesus is willing to save sinners, just as we heard in His words that He was willing to heal them of their bodily infirmities. In like manner, and even more so, He is willing to heal their spiritual diseases. If He has come into the world to save sinners, He is also willing to have them share the salvation He has obtained for them. He is the same immutable Son of God that He has ever been, and He still has the same love for men that He had when He gave Himself for them in death. He has asserted this several times in His Word, "The Lord is . . . longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "Who (God) would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them."

This is great comfort for an awakened soul. When Jesus can and will, it must be so. The penitent sinner becomes assured of this, assured that his sins will be forgiven and that his conscience will be healed. This is the summary of all God's promises, that God is willing, that His good will is turned toward men. It was this comfort that was announced by angels at the Saviour's birth, "Men in whom he is well pleased."

This is glorious comfort for a man who is sad by reason of his sins. It sustains him in his temptations and gives him strength to reject the suggestion of the evil one, who whispers in his ear that it were better for him

to give up everything since it appears that he is making no progress in godliness. When the question of despair arises in a crushed heart as to whether God ever cares for so wretched and abominable a creature, then here is the glorious comfort that Jesus will help from the depths of sin. The saddened soul is thus enabled to unbossom his troubles to the Lord and to ask for help from the power of sin and Satan. When Jesus had assured the centurion of His willingness to help, the latter became encouraged to disclose his heart to the Saviour. The comfort received has a powerful attraction and leads those who seek for salvation to a sincere confidential talk with Jesus concerning His power and will to help, of which His gracious promises give assurance. The comfort also discloses the spiritual poverty and faith of such an heart. When Jesus had comforted the centurion with the assurance of His willingness to help, the centurion said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." Here was spiritual poverty. He added, "But only say the word, and my servant shall be healed." Here was a faith the likeness of which Jesus declared He had not found in Israel.

A like comfort is granted to a soul that is sighing for redemption from the misery of sin. He becomes assured that Jesus will help him. As Jesus stretched forth His hand and gave the leprous man both assurance and help, simultaneously, so He stretches forth His gracious hand in the Word, giving comfort to a penitent heart. One thus comforted no longer doubts that he will find healing for his soul, but says with Micah, "He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our in-

iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

He will also obtain help. Jesus said, "I will," and immediately continued, "Be thou made clean." And straightway his leprosy was cleansed. After Jesus had first declared Himself willing to come and heal the centurion's servant, and the man had believed that Jesus could and would do it, it happened even so. Jesus said, "Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee," and the servant was healed in that very hour. Similarly, in the very moment that a soul frightened by God's law believes that Jesus can and will blot out his guilt and make him righteous before God, it happens even as he believes. Jesus "blots out his transgressions as a thick cloud," clothes the soul in His meritorious righteousness, and grants it "an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus," who has purchased this with His obedience, with His blood and death.

Application.

In conclusion, you have now heard that Jesus is willing to heal you. It cannot be done, however, if you say in your heart, "I will not." Then Jesus must complain as in the case of the Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." But you say that you wish to be healed. You are anxious to get rid of secret apprehensions which occasionally trouble you, and of the anxiety which attacks you now and then. You are quite willing to have an healed, quiet, contented, and peaceful conscience; but you are not willing to admit that your secret uneasiness of mind comes from secret sins, that your anxiety is derived from a state of guilt not remit-

ted. This is equivalent to an unwillingness to be healed. The wounds of conscience must smart before they can be healed. If your sins have never caused you anguish, you can have no healed soul, and you should consider that your sins are quite as great, yes, even greater being thus concealed, and that eternal death must follow upon the temporal death, if your blindness and sense of security follow you till you meet death.

If there is some one, as I hope there may be, in this great congregation who sincerely wishes to find his soul's healing through Jesus Christ, I say to him, "Cast not away therefore your boldness"; for Jesus is of the same will as you, and your healing will certainly come in due season. Search in His Word, the Holy Scriptures, for a greater insight into His promises, which assure you that Jesus is willing to save. Pray that He may, by virtue of the power in His Word, give you the assurance, the same comfort, that He gave to the men in our text, "I will, I will"; then it shall be done unto you even as you believe and as Jesus wills. He shall Himself finish His gracious will upon you, deliver you from the sins which oppress you, and grant you His peace.

Again, if there be some one who has obtained such healing, then I have a word of warning in our Gospel of to-day. Jesus did not allow the leper who had been healed to tell any one until he had shown himself to the priest in accordance with the law of Moses, "for a testimony unto them." When the priests had permitted him to offer the gift of one healed then they had also acknowledged that the leper had been healed, and they had, consequently, testified against themselves that

Jesus was from God, since He had been able to do this. From this I wish to take occasion to warn the soul that has been healed: Speak not about it to men until you have first offered a sacrifice of thanks and praise to the Lord. Your offering of praise may thereupon, on some opportune occasion, be given in the presence of your unbelieving relatives and acquaintances as a testimony to their hardness and impenitence of heart in neglecting the grace offered them, by means of which they might have come to the same blessed condition for which you are praising the Lord.

In the second place, I wish to call to the attention of a soul thus healed the warning which Jesus gave to the man who had lain at Bethesda. Jesus found him in the temple after he had been healed, and said to him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Behold, you have found salvation for your soul. A rare occurrence in our days! Sin no more. Beware of your former sins, lest you fall into them again and into a far worse condition than before. You have the same inherited disease as the rest of our race. I mean the original and congenital sinful depravity. Beware, lest its lusts deceive you to consent to any sin and to transgress God's commandments. You are living in a world which "lieth entirely in the evil one," and where most men are afflicted with the prevailing leprosy of sin. You must therefore see to it that you be not again "entangled in the defilements of the world." "Keep yourself unspotted from the world." Resist the devil manfully, with prayer in faith, that he may not wound your conscience and corrupt your soul. Seek Jesus Christ in the Word, for He is your soul's salva-

tion. Be anxious to have your life in faith strengthened and nourished by frequent communion at the Lord's Table.

Now if my Lord Jesus should wish that this probation sermon of mine shall be the only word of God which I am to preach among you, let His will be done. It would be great joy for me in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ — and, indeed, it is even now a gratifying thought — if, by virtue of the healing power of the Word of God, some of my auditors should stand healed in His sight.

Amen, in His name, amen.

A Sermon For Magistrates

In the Name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It is as when a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch. Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh.

In this parable Jesus Christ represents the condition of every man with reference to the account of his administration, which the Lord of all the earth shall unexpectedly demand of him, and the watchfulness therefore necessary in our stewardship. "It is as when a man, sojourning," etc. Mark. 13. 34.

After Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man, had with His blood bought us to be His own, and had with grievous and bitter toil provided us with gifts and appointed us as stewards, He was declared to be "Lord of all." After He had come down to this world and here taken upon Himself human nature, after He had spent thirty years sharing the misery of this life, He now, in the parable before us, considered heaven to be another, yes, a foreign country, although He "was in heaven" even while here on the earth. He departed in a visible manner and was taken up to heaven in the

sight of the disciples. Before this, however, He left the goods in His house, His possessions in the kingdom of nature and of grace, in the care of His servants. He gave them "authority, and to each one his work." The porter, or the ministry, received a special admonition to watch and await the return of the master, which should certainly take place, though no one knew when. The Lord Jesus now extends and applies this admonition to each and every one, "Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh."

This same Lord of all lords has, even since His departure to the Father, in His almighty government retained earthly rulers and judges. In His Word He asserts that these officials are retained and sustained by the government of God. They have not, like the wild beast, received their thrones and power from the dragon, but from God, "for the powers that be are ordained by God." The office is from God, though men determine who shall manage it.

Inasmuch as a judge has received his office and the power thereto appertaining, he is obligated to render an account to the Lord from whom he has received his office. The admonition in our text, then, concerns also judges, "Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh." Let us pray that they as well as all men may humbly take the admonition to heart. "Our Father," etc.

Text 2 Cor. 5. 10.

For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Proposition.

THE TRIAL AND FINAL JUDGMENT OF AN EARTHLY JUDGE AS A WEIGHTY MAT- TER FOR HIS CONSIDERATION IN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS OFFICIAL DUTIES

1. The trial and judgment of an earthly judge in his official capacity.
2. A weighty matter for his consideration in the performance of his official duties.

First Part.

The Trial and Judgment of an Earthly Judge in the Day of Judgment.

This trial is inevitable, for "we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." It is not in the matter of judgment as in that of conversion, that a person may do as he pleases. No, judgment will be made, though we may not like it. You cannot in judgment act as you may attempt to act when called to the kingdom, namely, excuse yourself and stay away. No, you must be manifest, even though you might prefer to be buried under mountains and hills, for "we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." Such an investigation awaits us all, consequently also judges, for our text says, "we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." There are certain events which are very common among men, but none of these is more common than judgments. It is a general law that we must all

die, and yet there have been exceptions even to this law. Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven without any previous separation of body and soul. In the last day there shall be numerous exceptions to this law of mortality, for "we shall not all sleep," says Paul with reference to the human race. Concerning those who shall live at the end of the world, he says more especially that they shall be changed. But even in that very day, when so many shall escape death, no one will escape judgment, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ."

There will be a careful, considerate investigation on the last day. The apostle expresses this with the word "manifest." "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." The whole man, with all his relationships, shall then be brought into the light which beams forth from the all-seeing eyes of Jesus Christ. This implies, not only what the apostle says at another place, "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God," but even more, namely, what Solomon says in the last words of Ecclesiastes, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

Then a judge also shall be made manifest in all his official transactions, not only in matters pertaining to him personally and to others of his profession, which shall all be made known, but even everything that has taken place in the official performance of his judicial duties. The purpose he had in view when he sought for so responsible a position and the ways and means used to attain so great a distinction shall be made manifest, not only according to the conception of a light-

hearted and covetous world, but in the light of God's Word, which even now shines, but which shall then reproachingly enlighten consciences where prejudice and blindness mostly prevailed. Everything that the judge has said in matters belonging to his office shall then be revealed, even the most hidden motives actuating him, for "the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts."

Upon this trial follows a stern and irrevocable judgment. Paul expresses this empathically. Instead of the judgment he mentions its executions, punishments or rewards, for here execution follows immediately upon the judgment. He does not say that each one may be judged according to what he has done, but "that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done." Nor will the result, as is sometimes the case when men pass judgment, be different from that which the appearance of things led one to expect. No, you may know beforehand what the result will be, if your conscience is enlightened by the Spirit of God so that you know what you have done, for "each one shall receive the things done in the body," that is the things done while he lived. Here the judge is not guided by the false testimony of perjurers, for the deeds shall themselves bear witness. They shall be the data and material for the judgment, and "each one shall receive the things done."

A judge, no doubt, has opportunity to do much good, for he has great power. If he has permitted the Holy Spirit to convert his heart to believe on Jesus Christ, so that in the love of Christ he desires to do that which is right and good, that is good according to the Word

of God, then he has somewhat of his Saviour's power also. It is then certain that he will do good, for what he does comes from a heart cleansed and sanctified by grace. Nor will he fail of his reward, not indeed by reason of his own merits, but by reason of the grace of God, for Christ's sake alone. The judge's unselfishness shall be rewarded with imperishable, heavenly treasures, instead of the gifts of perishable silver and gold which he has sacrificed. Having been just in his judgments, he shall be crowned with the "crown of righteousness." For his kindness and patience with the cries of distress he shall "find mercy of the Lord in that day," when "each one shall receive the things done in the body, whether it be good or bad."

On the other hand, woe to the unrighteous judge, "which feared not God, and regarded not man," for he shall receive the deeds done in the body. The bribes which he has received that he might pervert justice shall be as an eternal fire in his conscience, and the tears of those who have suffered wrong shall unceasingly trouble his soul, for "each one shall receive the things done in the body," and be judged according to his deeds.

Second Part.

A Weighty Matter for the Consideration of a Judge in the Performance of his Official Duties.

The final judgment is a weighty matter. According to what has just been said, the coming judgment is important, for there will not then as now be any way of escape for an unrighteous judge. Things cannot be buried in darkness before Him "who hath eyes like a

flame of fire." It shall be impossible to complicate the trial and to give matters a false appearance, for the Supreme Judge is an omniscient God, who searches the reins and hearts of men. It shall not avail against the Almighty, to use a power one no longer has, nor to resort to new deeds of violence in defense of previous wrongs.

The final judgment is a weighty matter for a judge, for on it depends his eternal welfare. My beloved, what is temporal welfare in comparison with eternal welfare, and of what avail is the former if the latter be neglected? It is verily nothing but imagination, a dream, often mingled with apprehensions and pain. How rapidly this changing stream of time flows on; and we are carried along soon to face the Judge and to receive the verdict of our eternal destiny as prepared by ourselves in this present life.

This final trial and judgment is important for a judge, for he will then be confronted by a situation which a judge fears above all things in this life. To have all his actions and judicial decisions subjected to an official public examination has always — and rightly so — seemed to a public officer a terrible ordeal. But this, our text tells us, shall certainly happen on the last day. Even the book of conscience will be opened and the whole world shall be able to read what is there written. If a judge should be judged by his inferiors, yes, by those whom he has judged, he would consider this very humiliating, but this very thing shall happen. A judge, who has not been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, nor has by the holy God been received into fellowship with the saints that are to judge the world, will be

judged by them. If he has been a man of the world, here in life, if from his judgment-seat he has spoken of the world, then he shall have to suffer the disgrace in the day of judgment of seeing among his own judges those whom he here despised and judged.

A judge should consider this weighty matter, namely, that a careful examination and a stern judgment await him in the day of judgment.

He should be anxious to have his own case adjudged before that day: the matters that concern his own person, the matter of his salvation; that the offenses committed by him in office and out of office, for which his conscience accuses him in his solitary moments and in times of distress; that sins condemned in the Word of God may be conquered and that he may desist from his denials and excuses and no longer resist the Holy Spirit. He should be anxious that the Holy Spirit may by means of the Word reveal Jesus Christ in his conscience, that he may realize how the Saviour has in His death fulfilled the judgment against us and that in His resurrection He was "taken away from oppression and judgment." A judge should remember that "the Father hath given all judgment unto the Son," that it is He who can make the serfs of sin free indeed from the punishment of serfdom which He has Himself endured and justify them with the righteousness which He has purchased for them with His own obedience. To seek after this in the Word of the Lord and to call upon His name should be matters of chief concern to a judge, for otherwise his whole official position becomes fundamentally iniquitous and his judgment fearful, whether men praise or censure him.

A judge should consider this weighty matter that he might conduct his office in the fear of God. The apostle Paul makes an analogous conclusion in the verse following our text, "knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men," we deal gently and tactfully with men. Paul realized this as a teacher, and judges should come to a similar realization, that they may be kind and sympathetic in their office, remembering that they must give account of their stewardship, and that a careful examination and a stern judgment are pending. With this object in view this doctrine is presented in the Word of God by the apostle of Christ, and with the same object in view I have presented it to-day.

Application.

Most worthy auditors, you who are appointed to be judges over the people, hear now the voice of God, a message from the Judge of all the world, even of you. Hear the word now preached to you and according to which you are to be judged on the last day, hear it in such a manner that it may, even before that day, be a judge in your thoughts, in your inmost hearts, in your consciences, in order that you may with free consciences and courageous hearts proceed to judge your brethren. Do not then forget that you are some day to be judged exactly as you have judged others. As is done before your judgment-seats, so it shall be done in that supreme judgment when each one shall receive the things done in the body. The Lord God grant that even then, on the day of judgment, you may be judges, that you may be numbered among the many thousand saints with whom the Lord shall come "to execute judgment upon

all, and to “convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

It is not judges alone who are to be examined in the last day, for “we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ.” Judgment shall then be passed, not only upon the deeds of judges, but also upon my conduct as a preacher; upon your way of bringing up your children, O father and mother; upon your manner of living together, O man and wife; upon your conduct in your parental home, O child; upon your conduct as a servant. Consider this matter in the light of the Word, before that final judgment shall be made. Pass the sentence upon yourself in confession and prayer before the mercy seat, and you shall obtain mercy and not come into condemnation, but pass from death to life. Beware of passing judgment upon the consciences of others, for that judgment belongs to God; or upon their faults, for that belongs to the judges. Still less does it behoove you to pass judgment privately upon judges in their public transactions, for you are not a judge at all, least of all their judge. “Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.” Amen.

Communion Sermon

In the Name of Jesus Christ.

I am all full of festering sores, Come lay Thy hand upon me; I am adrift, far from the shores, Let Thy grace never fail me. I am so weak, have pity, Lord, An erring sheep Thy care afford, Thy grace alone I'm pleading.

Thus may every erring, anxious soul pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is true God and the great Chief Shepherd, who has given His life for the sheep. In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth,
Where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou
makest it to rest at noon:
For why should I be as one that is veiled
Beside the flocks of Thy companions?*

The book from which these words are taken is sealed to the world. It contains a conversation between Christ, the Redeemer, represented as a bridegroom, and His faithful congregation, represented as a bride. It is the bride who here speaks to the friend of her soul. She declares her own love for Him and asks where He is dwelling. She expresses her anxiety and fear in view

of the condition that would confront her, if she should longer lack His gracious presence. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon: For why should I be as one that is veiled, beside the flocks of Thy companions?" Song of Songs 1. 7.

We find in this book various figures of speech at which carnal minds have taken offense and fallen, but here are depicted the experiences of a faithful soul who stands in grace, the infirmities that appear, the temptations to which it is exposed, the by-ways on which it may chance to enter, together with the gracious chastisement of God, the unfailing love of Jesus, and the wonderful guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Here the bride is expressing her first longing for communion with the Saviour. She has already received great insight into the ways of the Lord. She is aware of the dangers of turning away by which a soul seeking after Jesus may be tempted. To this she gives expression by saying that the reason for her longing to know where her friend is dwelling is that she may not be as one that is veiled beside the flocks of His companions.

It is evident that the bride here speaks of flocks other than that of Jesus, which is one only. She speaks of several flocks under the care of the Saviour's companions, who are shepherds as He and have His pastoral office. They gather flocks for themselves not for Him. By the misuse of natural and official gifts they turn the attention of their listeners away from "God that giveth the increase to him that planteth and watereth." By seeking and gaining the idolatrous love and the blind confidence of their infatuated followers, they lead hearts

from the way where God's love should find room in them, and in this way souls are drawn from their rightful owner, who has bought them with His holy and precious blood. The bride fears to come under the guidance of such shepherds and into fellowship with the parties and congregations of men. The reason for her fears is that she realizes how dangerous and blissless the condition is into which she would be placed through such afflictions: "Lest I be as one veiled, lest I go hither and thither."

The word used depicts the condition of a man fatigued with much walking and afflicted with excessive heat. This is something that usually goes with the state of awakening. It finds expression in an old psalm.

"Though I may roam far from my home,
On land and sea I languish,
I seek in vain the slightest lane,
Where dwells no grief nor anguish."

It may readily happen that an awakened soul begins to think that maybe this or that pastor might help him to obtain peace of conscience, or that he might come nearer to the Redeemer, if he should join this or that group which claims to be in so intimate a relationship with the Saviour. But quite the reverse happens. You seek for Jesus among men, you heartily long for peace, but your anxiety increases more and more, and you drift farther and farther away from your Saviour. It is by Him that you are to enter into communion with His members, not the reverse. Relationships with men do not bring you into a right and blessed communion with your Saviour. Choose the only right way. Do as the

bride in our text: turn to your Saviour in hearty prayers and supplication that you may know Him and that He may Himself bring you into His blessed fellowship. Speak to Him and say, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon. For why should I be as one that is veiled beside the flocks of Thy companions?"

It may seem strange that a person who is not yet conscious of having come to the Saviour may nevertheless love Him, yes, may say in the more exact language of the Spirit, "Thou whom my soul ardently loveth." It is certain that in a heart where the Holy Spirit has wrought faith, there "the love of God is shed abroad." Even in the very first moment of faith, when it is perceived merely as a seeking after the Lord, a pressing onward to His righteousness, this constant seeking after Jesus, this hungering and thirsting after His righteousness, as nourishment for the soul and rest for the conscience, are evidences that love for Jesus has been quickened in the soul. We seek for something which we value, something by which we hope to become happy, something in which we find pleasure, something that we love.

Ask your heart, if you can truthfully address the Lord Jesus with these words, if you can conscientiously say that you dearly love Him. Does your soul affectionately seek after Him? This is the first spark of the love which is kindled in the soul. But what need is there of asking your heart, if your outer life and your deeds bear witness that you are one of those who walk as "the enemies of the cross of Christ?" If you love the world and "mind earthly things," then the love of the Father is not in you. Judge then for yourself if it is reason-

able and consistent with God's order of grace to suppose that you are nevertheless partaking of God's grace and love. It is clearly evident that since you do not love the Son of God neither do you believe on Him. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Jesus has commanded His servants to declare this very thing to all impenitent sinners, that they are under the wrath of God as long as they remain in their sins. He said to His disciples, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." According to this commandment of my Saviour, I tell you, on His behalf and in the name of the Triune God, that you, who wish to retain your sins and to love any of them, must also retain the guilt and wretchedness of your sins, and you cannot take comfort in the love and grace of God.

You, who are now penitent, fleeing from sin and seeking Jesus, have been in a similar condition. You saw your sins delineated by the commandments of God, and under His threats you felt that they were abominable and condemnable. You learned that such dregs cannot satisfy an hungry soul. They may give you a sense of tumbling recklessness, but no peace; they may feed your imagination, but they give no refreshing and quickening hope. Oh, that you might turn to the Chief Shepherd and pray that you might find Him and thus obtain the right nourishment for your soul! "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon." You would then certainly find that your prayerful question is al-

ready answered in the Word. It is the answer which the bride received in the following verse,

“If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,
And feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.”

This answer contains, first, a rebuke for ignorance, as the original Hebrew text has it, “Do you not know it?” It is a reprimand similar to that in Hebrews 5. 12, “When by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God.” A person who by the Word of God has been brought to seek after Jesus should have learned in the Word where to find Him. It is deplorable that such ignorance can be found in awakened souls. It is usually hidden from them, and they need a rebuke such as was given to the bride in order that their ignorance may be revealed to them. The Messiah, however, mingles kindness with severity and, in the second place, follows up the rebuke with the glad gospel message, “O thou fairest among women!”

The communion of saints is the most beautiful and glorious of all human associations, whether secular or religious, before the all-seeing Son of God, who searches the reins and hearts of men. It is the inner man which the Holy Spirit has sanctified “to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” He has built up in our inmost souls faith “in the beloved Son in whom God is well pleased,” while “without faith it is impossible to please God.” It is by faith that saints are dressed in the garments of righteousness and salvation, as the psalmist signifies when he

says concerning the bride of Christ, "The king's daughter within the palace is all glorious:.* Her clothing is inwrought with gold." The bride herself refers to this in the verses preceding our text, where she compares her appearance to that of the "tents of Kedar and the curtains of Solomon," which are outwardly "scorched and swarthy," like wretched dwellings, while within they were beautifully decorated and filled with riches or, though orderly and dignified outside as Solomon's porches and curtains, they were surpassingly so inwardly full of riches and splendor.

In the third place, the answer of the bridegroom contains instruction, for both rebuke and comfort become fruitless, unless the ignorant be also instructed. Therefore Christ tells His bride how she shall come to enjoy His presence. He gives her twofold advice.

"Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock." The footsteps of the sheep mark the way by which the approved saints of the Lord have gone through repentance and faith to eternal life, and these marks are recorded in the Scriptures. We find their footsteps traced in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and in the beginning of the twelfth chapter a faithful witness of Jesus exclaims, "Let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand

* "The king's daughter is all glorious within," acc. to A. V. which agrees with the Sw. version used by Schartau.

of the throne of God." Enter in upon these footsteps. Look and see in the Holy Scriptures how many have been converted and saved, and you shall find that it is not impossible for any one, and that you also can and should be saved. There cannot be so great obstacles in the way of any one seeking for salvation but that other believers mentioned in the Scriptures have passed through the like and have been saved. Lot did not perish in the godless Sodom. Joseph and Daniel did not deviate from the ways of the Lord, though they dwelt in royal palaces. Lazarus was saved in his poverty, and Abraham in his riches. Let then the Spirit of God lead you on the way which these have gone. Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock. Let the Spirit of God constrain you to give heed to these things, as Lydia did, and the Lord shall open your heart as He opened hers. Go like Peter out from your evil companions and consider your fall penitently as he did, and you shall be helped and restored as he was. Let yourself be persuaded to make an honest confession as David did, saying heartily, "I have sinned against the Lord," and you shall receive the same reply as he, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

The second item of advice which Christ gives His bride is this, "Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." The shepherds formerly had their houses out in the fields where there was the best of pasturage. Here the sheep were gathered to rest, for there was less danger of going astray here than out on the vast frontiers. The homes of right minded pastors are such tents, where sorrowful sinners may find direction how they shall find food and rest for their souls. But more especially the churches

are such tents, where the flock of the Good Shepherd may congregate. Here the Word is found in its greatest purity and blessing. The "kids" are the spiritual children, who do not have great ability of discernment to distinguish evil from good, while evil and good are commingled even at many places where there is much talking in the name of the Word of God. Therefore the spiritual children are safest when gathering their spiritual food in the house of the Lord. It is such a place where I am now speaking the Word of the Lord. I will therefore as a faithful shepherd make diligence to give my sheep wholesome food, and I shall by the grace of God beware lest I be like those who corrupt the Word of God.

After the bride has asked the Chief Shepherd where He feeds His flock, she next inquires where He prepares rest for His sheep, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon." Mark this, dear soul, this order: first food, then rest for the soul. First you are to be brought to the green pastures of God's Word, and thereupon you are to receive refreshment and peace unto your soul as these are found in the Holy Communion with Jesus. The peace which a faithful Christian finds in the Lord's Supper is the "rest at noon" whereof our text speaks. In the eastern countries where Solomon wrote this book the heat at noon is very great, so that the sheep cannot then eat, but must seek rest in a shady place. We may imagine how the shepherd gathered the sheep nearer about himself and how they lay down beside him. It has already been shown that in this book heat symbolizes anxiety, sorrow, and unrest, weakness,

and suffering. When the heat of affliction and temptation has reached the height of noon, then it is time to seek shelter and rest. These the believer finds with God, Immanuel, the Chief Shepherd, for he "has been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." "He is our peace," and the peace He gives is found in His Supper. Our text represents that the Chief Shepherd Himself also rests, for His bride asks Him where He dwells, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest and findest rest at noon." It is also with reference to Holy Communion as administered in Zion, that is in the true congregation of Jesus, that He says,

"This is my resting-place for ever:
Here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

At the communion table the Chief Shepherd gathers His sheep round about Himself; here He is the very nearest to them, He gives them His body and blood and thus brings them into the most intimate communion with Himself. If you have hitherto wandered from one flock to another, come now to the table of grace. Jesus calls you, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Here your unrest shall be quieted, here your heart shall find rest. You have His own word that you shall find Him here, for He has Himself said that in this bread you have His body, and in this cup His blood. You may rely on His promise that here you shall find the forgiveness of sins when you partake of His blood, which was shed for the

remission of your sins. With this you must be satisfied and not ask more than He has promised, namely refreshment and peace. Yes, even when you enjoy this, you must not expect that it shall always be thus. The bride says expressly in our text that it is only at noon that she expects to find the Chief Shepherd at rest with His flock. A soul fatigued with anxiety needs rest and peace, but a person who always desires to rest is lazy. A person who boasts of enjoying undisturbed quiet in his heart is not with Jesus, does not belong to His flock; for after His sheep have enjoyed communion with Him in the Lord's Supper, they are again brought out in the pastures of the Word to grow in peace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Here they must not rest in quiet, but ever advance along the way that leads to eternal life, whither the Chief Shepherd has Himself gone before them. They may not enjoy undisturbed peace, for their enemies the wolves — Satan, the world, and the flesh — daily tempt them to sin. They must also according to their Lord's commandment use the nourishment which they have received in the Word, the strength imparted by the Holy Supper, not to rest idly in the consciousness of the grace they have received, but to exercise themselves in godliness and to be diligent in doing good and fervent in love to God. Go then, according to the words of the Chief Shepherd, from this peaceful Supper to have peace in your work, there to show fidelity and to receive your reward. When you come out into the pastures of the Word, lo, you shall find a vast field, covered with the most beautiful flowers, the most glorious and comforting truths, teachings, examples, promises, and commandments. These grow

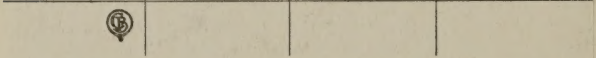
together. Do not undertake to make selections according to your own mind, but take them according as the Chief Shepherd enables you to understand and believe them. After such an interchange of work and rest, war and peace, Jesus shall, in a blessed death, take you from the pasture into the paradise of God and "give you to eat of the tree of life." He shall translate you to "the rest which remaineth for the people of God," where no heat of anxiety shall befall you, and where God shall wipe all tears from your eyes.

If any one of you here has wandered hither and thither to the flocks of the companions, it is time that you seek rest for your soul. This you will find with Him who is our peace. Come to Him who has bought you, and tell Him of your utter weariness. Confess your many sins, committed against Him, not only when like one spiritually asleep you were walking in manifest wickedness, but also when though awakened you walked in errors, relying on the testimonies of men with reference to your spiritual condition, in ignorant disputations about spiritual matters, in useless Sunday visits, in discord with worldly minded parents, in loveless wrangling with benighted people, yielding to carnal desires, neglecting your earthly vocation, passing unkind remarks about people you do not know, and in numberless wrong deeds which a useless doctrine brings forth. Ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you all this and to give you a hearty confidence in His infinite love. He gave His life for the sheep. He is ever present in His Word, though you do not see Him; yes, He is in your very midst while you are here congregated in His name. Come to agreement with Him. Confess your sins be-

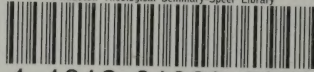
fore Him. Ask Him to receive you in His arms as one of His sheep, saying, "I poor, sinful being" etc.* Amen.

* "I poor, sinful being" are the opening words of The Confession of Sins in the liturgy of the Church of Sweden.

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